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DISSERTATION

ON THE

QUERULOUSNESS

OF

STATESMEN.

Si unquam dubitatum est, Quirites, utrum tribuni plebis—
vestra, an sua causa, seditionum semper auctores fuerint, id ego
hoc anno desisse dubitari, certum habeo: et quum lætor tandem
longi erroris vobis finem factum esse, tum quod secundis potis-
simum vestris rebus hic error est sublatus, et vobis, et propter ve-
reipublicæ gratulor.

T. LIV.



L O N D O N :

SOLD BY T. LONGMAN, J. MURRAY,
AND J. DEBRETT.

M,DCC,XCH.

DISSERTATION

ON THE

QUEERULOUSNESS

STATERMEN



EDWARD T. MONAGHAN, JUNIOR,
AND
MCCORMACK.

THE
INTRODUCTION.

THE voice of complaint has, for ages, filled the haunts of our politicians. But, during the progress of that extensive, tedious, wasteful war, in which we were engaged ten years ago, it increased till it had filled the whole of our empire. With the lapse of time, it has, in some places, grown weak : in some it has died quite away. In others, however, it is still found to be both strong, and animated. It seems to have been kept alive, since the termination of the American contest, for the purpose of convincing the public, that Great Britain, whatever some of her over-zealous friends may allege, hath seen her best days; and is, at length, declining—from no ordinary height of grandeur and renown — to an unusual depth of abasement and infamy: *Confidisse rempublicam, nihil spei reliquum.*

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That means, calculated to effect a purpose at once so important, and so unwarrantable, must have disquieted the mind of many a worthy man, will readily be allowed. For, it is obvious, that one who sincerely loves his country, cannot hear of her being consigned to a miserable doom, and yet remain cold, and unconcerned: He cannot, on being told that she is undone, content himself with saying, "I always knew that she was mortal."—As for me, I will not deny, that the strains of the querulous have, at times, somewhat discomposed me. But, they have done more than this to many of my fellow-subjects. To them, they have often occasioned great uneasiness: And it was with a view, if not to remove, at least to alleviate the uneasiness which they felt, that I at first resolved to write these pages. Their object is to shew, That the posture of the affairs of the British nation is such, that hardly one despondent idea can, with propriety, be admitted into a just description of it.

In order to accomplish this object, it will be necessary to contemplate almost every circumstance, that can contribute materially towards forming our judgment, with regard to either the prosperity, or the dignity, or the permanency of the empire. Through the contemplation of such circumstances, we shall be enabled to determine,
whether,

whether, at the present juncture, it behooves us to deport ourselves like a people sinking into a state of insignificance ; or, to cherish high expectations, and participate freely of commendable pleasures : And, likewise, what is the real character of the patriotism of those persons, who have so long amused the world, by staking all their credit for sagacity and penetration, upon the fulfilment of predictions, which have seldom held out less to their countrymen than the total ruin of every thing dear to them,

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THE
DISSERTATION,

WERE a Briton to listen to the effusions of certain zealous partizans, without having attended to the effects which seclusion from office usually produces upon the minds of such men, he would almost be persuaded, that nothing less than a miracle could preserve his country from destruction. In marking their procedure, he would find them bewailing her condition as pathetically, as if the very last hour of her existence were arrived. He would perceive that they discoursed of her, not as if she had experienced a destiny like that of the ancient empires, that were permitted to endure till they fell through the extent of their dominions, and the multitude of their crimes; but, one resembling that of a state doomed, without pity, to a premature fate——of a hapless state, whose constitution some Cromwell, some “man of the people,” had arisen to subvert; whose glory
some

some fortunate invader had tarnished, or destroyed ; and whose best citizens a judgment from heaven had swept from off the face of the earth.

But, when duly acquainted with the characteristick temper of disappointed statesmen, he would discover, that the face of things had received a colouring that was at once unnatural and deceptious : that no conjuncture of our affairs had been such, as to render it necessary for providence to deviate from its ordinary course ; and, that that which had been represented as a tremendous precipice, was, in fact, a commanding and enviable eminence.

It has not been merely on one occasion, or in contemplating one event, that statesmen have complained : on most occasions, and in contemplating almost every auspicious, as well as every wayward event, they have been heard raising the voice of sorrow real, or pretended. “ I have,” said Earl Bathurst, in replying to something that had been thrown out in a debate respecting the revenue, introduced by Lord Rawdon, anno 1788, “ I have been in the habit of attending to the
 “ parliamentary proceedings for more than half a
 “ century ; and I can safely assert, that there has
 “ not been a single session, during that very con-
 “ siderable period, in which I have not heard of
 “ some

“ some noble, or honourable person’s declaring—
 “ not only that the finances were greatly de-
 “ ranged; but that the affairs of the nation, in
 “ general, were hastening to ruin.” The accounts
 which we have of the debates in parliament make
 it evident, that his Lordship’s memory was per-
 fectly correct. Great Britain certainly possesses
 no means either of encreasing, or of securing her
 affluence and strength, which have not, at times,
 been made the topick of gloomy declamation.

The diminution of our territory in America;
 the insufficiency of the public revenue; the decay
 of manufactures, and commerce; together with the
 neglect of agriculture, and the depopulation of
 our villages; are circumstances which have often
 engaged the attention of politicians, and extorted
 from them many expressions of regret. As if these
 evils, assumed in their greatest extent as real
 ones, were yet too small, the same politicians
 have conceived luxury to subsist among us, in as
 high a degree as it did among the Romans, at the
 most vicious period of the reign of the most de-
 generate of the Cæsars. They have spoken of
 corruption, as if it threatened an immediate over-
 throw of the constitution. They have asserted,
 that the national character is extinct; and that
 the virtue of the people is no more. And, by
 way of fully convincing the world that they have
 not

not desponded by halves, they have sometimes included in one description, the ruin of every resource which our empire enjoys; and the annihilation of every quality through which her reputation has been exalted. — I am about to pay some attention to each of these topics.

The independence of the United States of America, has afforded much serious employment to the querulous. It has been the cause of many lamentations, both of a general and of a particular nature. Were I to make a collection of all the despondent language that has been used by my fellow-subjects, in such of their writings, and harangues, as relate to the independence of the States, I should be the compiler of a huge volume. But, there is no occasion for making any such collection. It will be quite sufficient to attend to the matter in a few instances; and that, too, chiefly, in common with other matters.

Not only distinguished authors, but statesmen possessed of the greatest wisdom, have spoken of the loss of America, as of an event likely to destroy the importance of Great Britain in the scale of nations; and to fully, for ever, the lustre of her crown.

“ With the colonies united to us,” says Dr. Price, “ we might be the greatest and “ happiest nation that ever existed. But with
“ the

“ the colonies separated from us, and in alliance
 “ with France and Spain, *we are no more a people.*
 “ —They appear, therefore, to be indeed worth
 “ any price.—*Our existence depends on keeping*
 “ *them.*” The Doctor adds in the same publica-
 tion *, “ When I consider the *present* sufferings
 “ which these coercive measures must occasion,
 “ and the CATASTROPHE with which they threaten
 “ GREAT BRITAIN, I am shocked; and feel my-
 “ self incapable of looking forward, without dis-
 “ tress, to the fate of an empire, once united and
 “ happy, but now torn to pieces, and falling a
 “ sacrifice to despotic violence and blindness.
 “ Under the impression of these sentiments, and
 “ dreading *the awful* CRISIS *before* us, I cannot
 “ help, however impotent my voice, crying out
 “ to this country—Make no longer war against
 “ yourself,” &c. No publick man will be sur-
 prised at finding such passages as these, in the works
 of Dr. Price; as it must occur to him, that one
 of the principal occupations of the Doctor’s life,
 was—to augur mischief to his native island. In
 the instances before us, however, his querulous-
 ness is not without some cause; and his error
 consists in carrying it to an extravagant length.
 The aspect of affairs, during the American con-

* Additional Observations on Civil Liberty and the War with America.

test, certainly was dark, and ill-boding. It must have been so in no ordinary degree, since, as we all know, it was capable of affecting deeply the minds of some of our most eminent political characters. Even the Earl of Chatham expressed very serious apprehensions, respecting the consequences of a separation of the greater number of the provinces in North America from the mother country. And, the Marquis of Lansdowne had conceived so high an opinion of their importance to the empire, that, when he thought of their being lost, his imagination catching fire, he called them "the sun of England."

That sun is set. Lord Lansdowne himself attended his setting. Is our empire, then, wrapped in obscurity, and benumbed with cold? Are the Earl of Chatham's apprehensions realized? Have we witnessed either Dr. Price's "awful crisis," or his "catastrophe?" Or, "are we no more a people?" All of these queries may be answered in one word: No.

Experience has shewn the falsity of almost every one of the unfavourable predictions, that have been uttered relative to the dismemberment of the empire. It now appears, that it was the pride, not the interest of Great Britain, that was about to be wounded by that event. Could one collect the

the sense of a very large majority of the British people, he would find, that the most painful emotions which they felt, during the time in which the war raged, arose from the circumstance of the greater part of that time having been so unlike a period, not yet immemorial, in which we were wont to hear of little else than victories; and to exhibit to the world, with exultation, an unparalleled variety of the finest scenes of heroism, and of glory. And could he hear their sentiments, on the special topick of the defalcation of the Thirteen Provinces, he would be persuaded, that it was not so much the loss supposed to have been sustained by their country that filled them with regret, as the manner in which she was forced to encounter it.

As for me, I have been accustomed to examine the war, and its consequences, on every side. When I have reflected upon the host of foes with whom we had to cope; and the brilliancy of some of the battles which my countrymen won towards the close of the contest—of Rodney's, which proved the justness of our claim to the sovereignty of the sea—of Heathfield's, which displayed resources equal to those of the Syracusan philosopher—and, of more than one of those that were fought in India, and which were as honorable to Britain, as the affair of Marathon was to

Greece; whenever I have reflected upon these things, I have been convinced, that, even on the score of martial glory, we were far from having any reason for being dissatisfied.

The fact of our having ultimately lost the object on account of which we drew the sword, diminishes not my conviction. For, if Rome, while mistress of the world, could not maintain her sway over Britain—a barbarous country of small dimensions, and divided from the body of the empire by a channel, the breadth of which never exceeded the sphere of human vision: if Spain, in the mid-day of her grandeur, could not enforce the obedience of seven small provinces, lying on the same continent, and inhabited by a race of men whom she contemptuously styled the “Scum of the sea;” nay, if she could not so much as preserve her authority over Portugal—an inconsiderable region, separated from her dominions by nothing but the fancy of a geographer; ought it to be deemed anywise reproachful to Britain, that she failed of prolonging her sovereignty over a world—a world, too, peopled by the proud-spirited sons of Englishmen, and situated on the remotest margin of the western ocean?

But, when I have turned my thoughts from those things which are characterised by being showy and
 attrac-

attractive, to such as are marked by being solid and useful, that is, to the causes of that increase of the principal materials of national aggrandisement, which Great Britain has experienced since she was deserted by her pampered, unnatural children, and since the necks of her inhabitants were eased of that weight which Dr. Tucker compared to a millstone; I have been convinced, not merely that we have no reason for being dissatisfied with the issue of our affairs; but, that we have many of the best reasons in the world for rejoicing at it—for concluding, in short, that either the forced, or the voluntary submission of our colonies, would have been to us one of the greatest of misfortunes. Nay, so thorough is my conviction, that, if there were not an apparent absurdity in the mode of expression, I should say, that Britain has, upon the whole, been a very great gainer by her American losses,

Ab ipso

Duxit opes, animumque ferro.

And, an age or two hence (I venture for once to be a prophet) she will be found to have gained by the secession of her provinces, in a degree that is now inconceivable.

In respect to what is Great Britain a gainer, or likely to be a gainer, by the secession of her provinces?

vinces? In respect to many things; but most evidently to foreign trade, to navigation, to populousness, to her enjoyment of peace, and, consequently, of wealth and safety.

Foreign trade I am afterwards to consider.

The navigation of our island has experienced, since the thirteen provinces became independent, all the beneficial effects that may be conceived to flow from the services of an additional number of seamen, amounting to more than twenty thousand. This accession of marine aid is owing, in some measure, to the vast increase of the tonnage of the shipping employed in the general commerce of the empire*; but, chiefly to the operation of those clauses of our invaluable navigation act, which relate to the built, and the manning of merchant ships. The British are now their own fishers on the banks of Newfoundland. They are their own carriers to every country to which their dealings extend; but especially to the West India islands,

* The tonnage of the ships cleared outwards, in this island, anno 1772, was greater than that of those cleared outwards in it any year previous to the American war. The number of tons cleared outwards that year amounted to 890,711. But, the number of tons cleared outwards in the year 1784, amounted to no less than 959,419. Our commerce has been flourishing, more and more, almost every day since the year 1784.

After

After all, of what singular importance can this same accession of marine aid be to Britain? Were not the inhabitants of the thirteen colonies British subjects? Undoubtedly. But, it so happened, that, according to their laws, not one of their seamen could be pressed into the service of the royal navy. And, while a smuggler, or a privateer, could be found (and in the colonies they were always to be found in abundance) the Americans never evinced much ardour to go, as volunteers, in quest of the common enemy.——Nor is an addition to the number of her seamen, the only eminent advantage resulting to the navigation of our island, from the independence of her colonies. Through their independence, a very considerable increase has taken place in the number of her ship-wrights. This circumstance, which, as well as the preceding, is owing, in a principal measure, to the operation of the navigation act, must be allowed to be of the highest moment to a manufacturing country, the defence of which depends upon her naval strength.——Of the augmentation of the number of seamen, and of shipwrights, our owners, and merchants have reaped the first fruits. The rest have fallen to the share of the publick; and were manifested to all Europe, and to all the world, in the matchless fleet drawn together at Spithead, anno 1790, in a space of time deemed, in all preceding periods, too short for preparing
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an armament half as powerful as that one obviously was.

The thirteen colonies were a direct, an incessant drain from the population of the parent country. Our labourers, manufacturers, and artists used to hasten thither in great numbers : And you might occasionally have seen persons, whose property gave them no small weight in the community, following their example. That infatuation which kept up the rage for migrating to the new world, excited at once pity, and regret. For, it did not merely exile the persons of our fellow-subjects ; it likewise alienated their best affections. At what time soever our countrymen have been in the act of repairing to the British possessions in the East Indies, or in the West, they have been known to cast “ a longing, lingering look behind :” And, throughout the whole period of their absence, they have considered one or other of these islands, as the goal at which their career was to terminate ; as the elysium in which they were one day to enjoy the sweets of their toil and peril. Hence the superiour value of those possessions.— But, when determined to resort to America, they have usually departed with light hearts ; and, during their residence there, have seldom cared whether they ever measured back their course to their native country. As to the descendants of the first American

rican settlers—of those men who professed to know little more of the British than the evils real, or imaginary, which they had experienced among them—if they did not hate the mother country, they were, at least, extremely indifferent about her welfare. By them no earthly abodes were desired, but those which they hoped soon to prepare in some of the American forests.—Was it in man long to retain such a people in subordination?

But, of all the objects gained by the secession of the provinces, the most important remains to be particularized. It is—an addition to the continuance of the peace of the empire.—Upon the empire's being permitted to enjoy peace, depends its permanence. Blessed with peace, in such a measure as the present condition of our affairs gives us reason to expect, our empire will, in all probability, be durable. But, exposed to such a quick succession of hostilities, as the sovereignty of all North America would infallibly have occasioned, its period must soon have been fulfilled. No empire, having immoderately encreased its territories, has ever failed of bringing upon itself—first envy, then suspicion, at length hatred, and finally the arms of all the surrounding powers, whose pride had been hurt by comparison, or whose apprehensions had been roused by the vicinity of a body—the

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weight

weight of which was, at any time, sufficient to crush them. Nor is the encreased probability of being assaulted, the only evil that results from an extraordinary enlargement of dominion. Such an enlargement at once incites inimical desires; and begets a facility of gratifying them: "The encrease of territory obliges a government to expose new sides by which it may be attacked *." To these considerations let the following be added — No territorial acquisition is either so apt to tempt the prowess of sovereigns; or so hard to defend against it; as that which is situated at some extreme part of an empire. For, a flourishing, distant colony, resembles a bold promontory, that stands far out into the main braving the rage of the elements; but which, through the action of their combined powers, is likely, one day, to be forced from its foundation, and borne away into the bosom of some country more compactly formed.

The translation of empires is not always occasioned by military operations solely: but sometimes, in part, through the intolerable accumulation of publick burdens. Viewing the matter in this light, we behold, in the independence of the United States, something that is consolatory.

* Montesquieu.

While they preserved their allegiance to Britain, she was bound to provide money for defraying the expences incurred on account both of their civil and judicial administration; and of their military and naval defence: and these things she did while she was keeping down the produce of her customs by low duties; and impoverishing herself by paying extravagant bounties, not merely for encouraging the growth of their staple commodities, but even for rewarding the exertions of their manufacturers. These circumstances were momentous. Yet they were nothing, when compared with the charges of the periodical wars into which the colonies led us, and would for ever have led us. The amount of these may be stated as being either indefinite, or infinite—just as the sound of the one word, or of the other, may be preferred. Let us hear the late Dr. A. Smith upon this interesting topick.

“ The expence of the ordinary peace-establishment of the colonies amounted, before the commencement of the present disturbances, to the pay of twenty regiments of foot; to the expence of the artillery, stores, and extraordinary provisions with which it was necessary to supply them, and to the expence of a very considerable naval force, which was constantly kept up in

“ order to guard, from the smuggling vessels of
 “ other nations, the immense coast of North Ame-
 “ rica, and that of our West Indian islands.
 “ The whole expence of this peace-establishment
 “ was a charge upon the revenue of Great Britain,
 “ and was, at the same time, the smallest part of
 “ what the dominion of the colonies has cost the
 “ mother country. If we would know the amount
 “ of the whole, we must add to the annual expence
 “ of this peace-establishment the interest of the
 “ sums which, in consequence of her considering
 “ her colonies as provinces subject to her domi-
 “ nion, Great Britain has, upon different occa-
 “ sions, laid out upon their defence. We must
 “ add to it, in particular, the whole expence of
 “ the late war, and a great part of that of the war
 “ which preceded it. The late war was altogether
 “ a colony quarrel, and the whole expence of it,
 “ in whatever part of the world it may have been
 “ laid out, whether in Germany or the East
 “ Indies, ought justly to be stated to the account
 “ of the colonies. It amounted to more than
 “ ninety millions sterling, including not only the
 “ new debt, which was contracted, but the two
 “ shillings in the pound additional land-tax, and
 “ the sums which were every year borrowed from
 “ the sinking fund. The Spanish war, which
 “ began in 1739, was principally a colony quar-
 “ rel.

“ rel. Its principal object was to prevent the
 “ search of the colony ships, which carried on a
 “ contraband trade with the Spanish main. This
 “ whole expence is, in reality, a bounty which
 “ has been given in order to support a monopoly.
 “ The pretended purpose of it was to encourage
 “ the manufactures, and to increase the commerce
 “ of Great Britain. But its real effect has been
 “ to raise the rate of mercantile profit, and to
 “ enable our merchants to turn into a branch of
 “ trade, of which the returns are more slow and
 “ distant than those of the greater part of other
 “ trades, a greater proportion of their capital than
 “ they otherwise would have done; two events
 “ which, if a bounty could have prevented, it
 “ might perhaps have been very well worth while
 “ to give such a bounty *.”

Had the Doctor written a few years later, he
 might have rendered his reasoning still more power-
 ful, by including in his estimate the expences in-
 curred during the rebellion which led to the in-
 dependence of the thirteen provinces.

But, the monopoly of the colony trade, accord-
 ing to some of the writers on political economy,
 added millions (about the number of which, how-

* Wealth of Nations, quarto, p. 222.

ever, they are far from being agreed) to the general yearly income of the British people ; and was, therefore, a sufficient compensation for every expence brought upon them by their American friends. Here again Dr. Smith merits attention.

“ In order to render any province advantageous
 “ to the empire to which it belongs, it ought to
 “ afford, in time of peace, a revenue to the public
 “ sufficient, not only for defraying the whole
 “ expence of its own peace establishment, but for
 “ contributing its proportion to the support of the
 “ general government of the empire. Every
 “ province necessarily contributes, more or less,
 “ to encrease the expence of that general govern-
 “ ment. If any particular province, therefore,
 “ does not contribute its share towards defraying
 “ this expence, an unequal burden must be thrown
 “ upon some other part of the empire. The ex-
 “ traordinary revenue, too, which every province
 “ affords to the public in the time of war, ought,
 “ from parity of reason, to bear the same pro-
 “ portion to the extraordinary revenue of the
 “ whole empire, which its ordinary revenue does
 “ in time of peace. That neither the ordinary
 “ nor extraordinary which Great Britain derives
 “ from her colonies, bears this proportion to the
 “ whole revenue of the British empire, will rea-
 “ dily

“ dily be allowed. The monopoly, it has been
 “ supposed, indeed, by increasing the private re-
 “ venue of the people of Great Britain, and there-
 “ by enabling them to pay greater taxes, com-
 “ pensates the deficiency of the public revenue of
 “ the colonies. But this monopoly, I have en-
 “ deavoured to shew, though a very grievous tax
 “ upon the colonies, and though it may increase
 “ the revenue of a particular order of men in
 “ Great Britain, diminishes, instead of increasing,
 “ that of the great body of the people; and, con-
 “ sequently, diminishes, instead of increasing, the
 “ ability of the great body of the people to pay
 “ taxes. The men too, whose revenue the mo-
 “ nopoly encreases, constitute a particular order,
 “ which it is both absolutely impossible to tax
 “ beyond the proportion of other orders, and ex-
 “ tremely impolitick even to attempt to tax be-
 “ yond that proportion, as I shall endeavour to
 “ shew in the following book. No particular
 “ resource, therefore, can be drawn from this
 “ particular order *.”

Whatever posterity may think of all these things,
 they will, doubtless, in perusing the history of
 Europe during the present age, consider it as

* Wealth of Nations, p. 225. The reader ought to have
 recourse to Dr. Smith's arguments respecting the insignificance
 of the American monopoly.

redounding not a little to the honour of Great Britain, that, at a period in which several nations felt themselves galled by oppression, and dreaded to make known their sensations, her subjects found themselves possessed of such a degree of freedom, as to admit of their deliberately taking those steps which led them to that pass, at which they resolved to turn their backs upon the native country of their ancestors—upon that country which had long nourished them with unparalleled tenderness, and protected them at an incredible expence. When the Americans began to rebel, neither the French, nor the Poles, durst so much as hint at the extent of their wishes relative to civil liberty: And, for the Flemings to have spoken publicly of their rights sixteen years ago, would have been to hazard the infliction of the severest punishment, which enraged and resistless tyranny could devise.

We have had a sufficient specimen of such complaints, respecting America, as are of a general nature. Of such as are of a particular nature, those which relate to the publick debts are the most interesting: and to them I shall advert, as they present themselves amid others upon the same topick.

Many writers who call themselves philanthropists, though, by their performances, they have injured their fellow-subjects; and many
speakers

speakers who allege that they are patriots, though from their efforts the government of their country reaps nothing but embarrassment, and their countrymen nothing but anxiety; many such writers, and such speakers, have long been sedulously employed in proving, that the nation ought to be greatly alarmed indeed, on contemplating the state of the finances, since they have happily discovered it to be such as to admit of no remedy which human wisdom can invent.

“ An unfavourable turn of events in the East
 “ Indies, or any considerable deficiencies in the
 “ revenue, might destroy our ability of paying
 “ even the interest of our publick debts. At least
 “ it is to be feared, that another war would exhaust
 “ our resources, *and bring our affairs to a crisis.*
 “ —In short, were our people to avoid destroy-
 “ ing themselves by intemperance, or only to
 “ leave off the use of one or two foreign weeds,
 “ the revenue would become deficient, and a pub-
 “ lick bankruptcy might ensue.—On such ground
 “ it is impossible that any kingdom should stand
 “ long.—*A dreadful convulsion cannot be very*
 “ *distant.* The next war will scarcely leave a
 “ chance for escaping it. But we are threatened
 “ with it sooner—An open rupture with our
 “ colonies may bring it on *immediately.*”—Most
 miserable country! that art either to be destroyed

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through

through the *use* of one or two foreign weeds; or undone through the *disuse* of them. These woful wailings were sent forth, just before the commencement of the American war*; of that war which was to produce “ a dreadful convulsion “ *immediately.*”

Let us now attend to some of those complaints that have been heard since the conclusion of the war. “ The dread and anxiety with which Government opens every budget, and the very “ high interest paid on every loan, must confirm “ the sad truths already announced, that *the state “ is declining*, and that *the prosperity of the nation “ is attacked in its vital parts.*—These plausible arguments (in favour of the efficacy of “ taxes) are so many ignes fatui, which have “ gradually brought Great Britain to *the brink of “ a precipice*†.”—Lord Newhaven, and the late Earl of Stair, from their condition in life, certainly have a right to a short hearing. The former says, “ Every man may try these few imperfect “ thoughts by his own circumstances; which, if “ he does justly, and without prejudice, he will

* In an Appeal to the Publick, on the Subject of the National Debt, by Richard Price, D.D. &c.

† An Essay on the actual resources for re-establishing the Finances of Great Britain, by George Crawford, Esq. Published anno 1785.

“ plainly

“ plainly see how much individual and national
 “ happiness must result from the adoption of
 “ them, by this country being delivered from its
 “ present *most oppressive debt and taxes*, under
 “ which, at this moment, *our commerce staggers*,
 “ and PUBLIC RUIN STARES THE NATION IN
 “ THE FACE *.” The latter announces the fall
 of our monarchy with a still greater emphasis.
 Having adopted premises of the justness of which,
 he says, he was convinced; and having finished
 his reasoning upon them, he observes, “ The
 “ infallible and inevitable conclusion that follows
 “ is, that *the State is a bankrupt*; and that those
 “ who have trusted their all to the publick faith, are
 “ in very imminent danger of becoming (I die
 “ pronouncing it) BEGGARS.” His Lordship
 elsewhere observes, “ I think I may be excused
 “ from standing forth any more in the publick
 “ service; and may, without reproach, wait with
 “ as much indifference as others, more imme-
 “ diately concerned than I am, do for the FATAL
 “ CATASTROPHE, which seems to be approaching
 “ fast, without any body’s caring or thinking
 “ about it.”

So much for the complaints, and the predic-
 tions, of politicians—upon the eve, and soon

* A short Address to the Publick, &c. by William Lord
 Newhaven.

after the termination, of that conflict which they had been pleased to consider as the proximate cause of the fatal crisis of our affairs. By such a crisis they, no doubt, meant some very great depression of the empire. Supposing that they did, let us remark of what nature those effusions were, with which the publick was entertained before, and immediately after, that splendid æra (1763) which has been assumed as the period of our greatest national eminence. Were they of a pleasing, and exhilarating nature? We shall know presently.

“ The vast load of debt under which the nation
 “ still groans (anno 1736) is the true source of
 “ all those calamities and gloomy prospects of
 “ which we have so much reason to complain.—
 “ To this we must likewise ascribe that ruinous
 “ spirit of luxury, corruption, and venality, which
 “ hath infected the whole nation, and almost
 “ effaced the very marks of frugality and publick
 “ virtue amongst us*.” Sir Mathew Decker
 attributes worse consequences than even these, to
 the existence of the public debt. “ Our large
 “ national debt,” says he, “ is fraught with many
 “ inconveniencies.—It has ruined our trade.—
 “ It destroys private credit.—It encourages

* Vide the Craftsman.

“ idle-

“ idleness.—— It encourages luxury.—— It wastes
 “ the body politick *.”

Thus our patriots complained antecedently to the glorious war of 1755. Nor did either the successes, and the triumphs, which attended the progress of that war; or the accession which these made to the reputation of the English among foreign nations; prevent the voice of despondency from being heard, as soon as the attention of the publick was again turned to the cultivation of the arts of peace. In a little tract, published anno 1764, entitled *CONSIDERATIONS on the TRADE and FINANCES of the KINGDOM*, our affairs, in general, are represented as being in a very hopeless condition; and the rapid increase of the national debt is stated as the principal source of the miseries which the author deploras. I shall not trouble my readers by quoting that tract.

* An Essay on the causes of the Decline of Foreign Trade, anno 1750.

If any one be desirous of making himself fully acquainted with the querulous temper of politicians, during that period which intervened between the commencement of the reign of George II. and that of the war of 1755, he may consult the performances of the Lords Bolingbroke, Lyttelton, and Bath, all of which he will find greatly to his purpose.

Nothing

Nothing has reflected more disgrace on the sagacity, and the foresight of politicians; nor has any thing contributed more towards teaching mankind the necessity of suspecting their professions, of receiving their assertions with abatements, and of disregarding, or contemning their anticipations of publick calamities; than the very frequent failures of their predictions, with regard to ruin being brought upon their country, through the deranged state of her finances. When I recollect by what kind of spirit the far greater number of politicians are actuated, I cannot but consider it as an instance of God's mercy towards us—that he has denied to all of them the gift of prophecy. Wretched, indeed, must my countrymen a thousand times have been, not merely if those evils had befallen them which their pretended friends had busied themselves in foretelling; but, even if they had been so unfortunate as not to be able to guess at the motives by which such persons are generally led to despair of the publick safety.

D'Avenant, very soon after the revolution, gave it as his opinion, that, “ unless the expen-
 “ diture could be brought to nearly two millions
 “ per annum, it would be found that, in no long
 “ course of time, we should languish and decay
 “ every year, by steps easy enough to be perceived
 “ by

“ by such as consider of these matters.” The publick expenditure has never been reduced to the standard at which D’Avenant wished to fix it. But, notwithstanding this circumstance, we certainly have not languished, and decayed, every year since the time at which he wrote.—Lord Bolingbroke appears to have seen neither farther, nor more clearly, into futurity, than did Dr. D’Avenant. His Lordship says, “ Our parliamentary “ aids, from the year 1740, exclusively, to the “ year 1748, inclusively,” (during the last four or five years of this period we were at war) “ amounted to £. 55,522,159—a sum *that will* “ *appear* INCREDIBLE to future generations.” What is the amount of eight years even of our peace establishment—and that too under an uncommonly economical ministry? The answer to this query would appear incredible to Lord Bolingbroke, could he come back to receive it. If so, it would be necessary for him, upon revisiting us, to be possessed of much more faith than he seems to have had while formerly among us, before he could give credit to Lord North, were he to inform him what the expenditure of the kingdom was in the last eight years of his administration.—Let us advert to the fallibility of financial Seers, in one or two other instances. Sir William Wyndham, in a speech delivered in the House

House of Commons, anno 1733, described the kingdom as labouring under very calamitous circumstances; as being, in short, in a state bordering upon utter ruin: and the groundwork of all that he said—the constant burden of his song, to speak familiarly, was—*That the public debts amounted to no less a sum than £.45,000,000.*—

Lord Lyttelton too, anno 1739, drew a very gloomy picture of affairs, in consequence of the publick debt then amounting to almost £.50,000,000.—Now, what would these statemen have said, had they been told, that a period was not very distant, in which Great Britain would owe, not 45, or 50, but 245, or 250,000,000 of pounds sterling? That they would have expressed either much amazement, on account of the extraordinary nature of the intelligence; or much dissatisfaction, from an idea that the intelligencer had a wish to take advantage of their credulity; one can hardly doubt, when he recollects what were the opinions of publick men, in those times, respecting the resources of the empire, and its power to bear any additional heavy burden.

“ It has been a generally received notion,
 “ among political arithmeticians, that we may
 “ encrease our national debt to £.100,000,000:
 “ but they acknowledge that it must then cease,
 “ by

“ by the debtor becoming bankrupt*.” Mr. Hannay is perfectly right. The prevailing opinion, at the commencement of the war of 1756, certainly was—that this kingdom could not bear itself up under the enormous load of one hundred millions sterling of publick debt. But, the loans of that same war fully prove how much he and the publick were mistaken: And, while they do this, they evince the folly of politicians indulging themselves freely in conjectures respecting the consequences of a people’s being placed in an untried predicament.

The weakness of politicians, in regard to their predictions of the future effects of financial systems, really does stand much in need of some sort of apology; and I know of none that can be made for it, except this—It resembles the prophetick imbecility of other contemplative characters. By a spirit as prone to divination, and as liable to error, as that which animated the politicians of the last reign, the professors and improvers of science have, in all ages, been actuated. Boerhaave gravely, and deliberately asserted, that no human being could subsist in air heated above the ninetieth degree!—When shall the disappointments of speculative men, and the ridicule which

* Letters by Samuel Hannay, Esq; anno 1756.

they so frequently bring upon themselves, teach them the expediency of occupying their minds with objects that are real, and within their reach ; and not with such as are imaginary, and so remote as ever to elude their grasp ?

It is not unworthy of being remarked, that all the statesmen, and authors, whose lamentations and prophecies, respecting the finances, have now been noticed, were either out of place, or connected with persons who had been deprived of their places, at the times they uttered them. They seem to have bequeathed the pseudo-prophetick art to Messrs. Fox, Sheridan, and Co. and these gentlemen will, doubtless, give up the practice of it—the very moment in which appointments under government shall be offered to them.

That they will do so, and accept, with alacrity, of such appointments, can hardly be doubted by any of those who have observed how anxious they have long been, not merely to point out the arduous nature of the publick work calling for performance, but even to create enough to occupy ministers on future occasions. The causes of their anxiety are no other than those which so frequently influenced their prototypes, the Roman tribunes, of whom this is recorded : *opus quærunt*

— et

—et semper ægri aliquid esse in Republica volunt, ut sit ad cujus curationem adhibeantur.

The best evidence of the flourishing state of the revenue plainly is, its surplus. With regard to this, the patriots (I mean those who systematically oppose the government of their country) are far from being of one mind. While some of them express doubts as to the permanence of the whole of the present surplus; others insinuate, that no such thing as a surplus really exists. Mr. Sheridan takes the lead of all those who act in this manner: and, certainly, the experience which he has had, in private life, of ideal property; his notorious effrontery; his malignity towards the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and the very small value which he ever sets upon the interests of the kingdom, when they come to be put in competition with the pleasure which it affords him to say any thing that may seem to embarrass government, that may occasion his being mentioned in newspapers as fit to cope with Mr. Pitt*, or that may entitle him,

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* “Mentioned in newspapers,” &c. No one can be conversant in the transactions of partymen, without knowing something of the artifices employed by Mr. Sheridan, to get himself praised, or protected, by the writers of newspapers. The truth may, at any time, be told of Mr. Fox, or of the Earl of Guildford; but very seldom indeed of R. B. Sheridan, Esq.

Among

as Mr. Burke once expressed it, “ to the praises of the Clubs :” All these circumstances, doubtless, qualify him, in an eminent degree, for appearing the foremost of those who vie with each other, in misrepresenting the condition of their country ; and in deluding, and perplexing their fellow-subjects. How does the matter, in reality, stand——between the prime minister, and this luckless adventurer ? It stands thus : The former tells parliament, and the publick, that the surplus of the revenue is fully adequate to the support of

Among the conductors of almost every newspaper, whether ministerial, or anti-ministerial, he has his retainers——paid, however, if paid at all, at the party’s expence : And it is, principally, to the good offices of such persons, that he is indebted for the reputation which he now enjoys throughout the kingdom. But his fame, he thinks, is precious. He, therefore, does not trust it wholly to the exertions of his retainers. He sometimes handles the quill in his own behalf ; and this he does not, as some others do, merely in writing speeches in his closet ; but, in CORRECTING THEM AT THE PRINTING OFFICES ! When he has had a little smart altercation, in the House, with Mr. Pitt, he has been known (I affirm the fact as one which I believe to be as true as that of his, or my own existence) to go, at a late hour, to a printing office ; and there to alter the observations, and the replies, that had been made, so as to suit them entirely to his own taste.——What would the world say of Mr. Pitt, or of any other gentleman eminent on account of his station, or his talents, who should seek for a name by acting a part so little, and so contemptible ?

that

that favourite national measure the Sinking Fund. The latter, on the other hand, contends, that the actual deficiency of the revenue is, for aught he can discover, nearly as great as the supposed surplus. He does not, indeed, so much as hint, that a million sterling is not, every year, allotted to the redemption of stock. He only alleges, that neither that sum, nor any considerable part of it, arises from the overplus of the revenue; but, is obtained by taking credit, at a time when all such ways and means are unjustifiable. It is when he aims at giving plausibility, and weight, to allegations of this sort, that he joins the faction in harping upon the million that was borrowed in the spring of 1788, to make good the sum that had been expended, during the former year, in removing the pecuniary encumbrances of an illustrious branch of the royal family; in rewarding the services, and relieving the sufferings of the American Loyalists; in putting our East and West India possessions in a suitable posture of defence; and in purchasing that which is worth almost any price—the friendship of the Republick of the United Provinces. Whenever he and his associates have spoken of that same million, as a proof of the failure of the minister's scheme of taking one million every year from the publick debt, they have been reminded of all these circumstances, and called upon to declare, whether,

or

or not, they are such as could be foreseen when the committee of finance, (anno 1786) sketched out the plan which ministry have since pursued ; and also, whether, or not, ministry would have had the smallest occasion to borrow any sum whatever, if such circumstances had not occurred. But, they have not thought proper to attend to such calls.

From this view of the topick, they have proceeded to the doctrine of averages. Mr. Pitt having argued upon the income, and the expenditure of three years, because each of the periods adopted by former financial calculators, as the most proper for forming average estimates, consisted of three years ; and having fixed upon the three years immediately preceding April 1790, because in them, and in them only, Great Britain possessed the resources which she now possesses, and is likely in future to possess ; Mr. Sheridan thought that he could do no less than affirm that, in order to have got at a satisfying average, the year 1786, ought to have been included. That is, as the wine duty bill had not begun to operate fully before the opening of the budget in the spring of 1787 ; as neither the bill for consolidating the excise, custom, and stamp duties, nor the commercial treaty with France, had been passed previously to that period ; and as there had been a hurricane in the

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the West Indies anno 1786; in short, as these, and several other circumstances, had concurred to render the year ending in April 1787 singularly unproductive of revenue — Mr. Sheridan, after deliberating candidly, no doubt, and maturely, upon all subsisting circumstances, was entirely of opinion, that that year ought, by all means, to have been one of those from which the average, intended to furnish us with an idea of our future income, was taken.

This procedure ought not to be deemed unworthy of Mr. Sheridan. It would very well become any one who should remind me, that, in the year 1786, I was a clerk in a merchant's house, from which I received a salary of 100*l.* per annum; that, having been admitted as a partner in it anno 1787, I that year received, as my moiety of the profits, 5,300*l.*; that my moiety, anno 1788, amounted to 5,100*l.*; and, anno 1789, to 5,500*l.*; and who, after thus refreshing my memory, should beg of me to tell him at what I rate my future yearly income. My answer would be, our business is more likely to improve, than otherwise. But, as I do not wish to have it said that I judge sanguinely, I shall suppose that it will continue to yield, every three years, just what it has yielded in the three that have elapsed since I have been a partner. The average of these is 5,300*l.*; and this
I take

I take to be a sum which I am justified in looking for at the end of every future year.—Not at all, my curious friend would add. Five thousand, three hundred pounds! What reason have you to expect so enormous a sum?—What reason have I? It is the average income of the three years that have elapsed, since I was put in possession of my present resources.—It may be so: but what have your present resources to do with your future income? Had you, Sir, had courage to look your situation broad in the face; had you not meant to deceive this house (the mercantile house) and to impose upon the publick; you would have estimated your future income upon the average, not of three, but of four years. You would have formed your judgment of what you are hereafter to receive, as a partner in your well-established flourishing concern, by considering not solely what you have received since you were a partner; but, also, what you used to receive before you were one: in other words, you would have added your income for the last year in which you were only a clerk, to the sum of your income for the three years immediately following that year; and then have taken the average of all the four. This is what you should have done; and, indeed, what you would do now, were the illustration of truth your object. I must, it seems, do the business for you. $15,900l. + 100 = 16,000l.$ Dividing the whole
by

by 4, the quotient is 4,000l. This, Sir, is your real yearly income. And while you go on, as you now do, spending 4,650l. every year, I must, instead of allowing that your income exhibits an annual redundancy of 650l. which may be used in paying off the debts contracted by your predecessors, plainly, and positively affirm in the face of this house, and of the whole world, that it labours under an annual deficiency of 650l.—You ought to know, Sir, that I wish you the greatest success in all your publick pursuits: and it is principally because I do so, that I have taken the trouble of thus unfolding the state of your finances. That this trouble must be very considerable, you will readily admit, when I confess to you, that I never in my life told a story, or, as a member of parliament would say, delivered a speech, at all extraordinary as to length, without being obliged, during the tedious period spent in collecting materials for it, in writing it, and in getting it by heart, to deprive myself not only of many of the comforts of society, by denying myself (on pretence of being sick) to such of my acquaintances as knocked at my door; but, also, of the blessings of freedom itself (about which I occasionally talk) by submitting to a confinement, scarcely less rigorous than that experienced in a common jail. After all, if the calculations which I have now made, serve either to put you to some inconvenience,

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venience,

venience, by inducing you to look over your accounts; or to give those whose prosperity depends upon the stability of your credit, some uneasiness, by leading them to apprehend that your affairs are irretrievably deranged; I shall have the consolation of reflecting, that I have discharged my duty, with all that regard to truth and conscience, which men of discernment know me to possess.

Mr. Sheridan's assertions, with regard to the state of the revenue, have attracted much notice. But, as he has, on most occasions, wanted the support of authentick facts; and argued against not only the experience of all those concerned in the management of affairs; but, likewise, the opinion of nearly the whole of the representatives of the people; the weight of his assertions has usually come, at last, to rest upon that, which, God knows, is the feeblest of all props—*his veracity*. Indeed, the people in general, having, year after year, heard of his trumping up the same sort of story about the finances; and not having been furnished with sufficient documents upon the subject, have had it in their power to satisfy themselves no otherwise, than by considering to what degree of credit he, and Mr. Pitt, are respectively entitled. The determination of this matter, again, they have found depending upon a knowledge of the different

rent effects arising from the diversity of the defects, of the prospects, of the occupations, and of the habits of the parties. And, whenever they have sought for such a knowledge, they have beheld objects than which no two can be more unlike.

They have beheld, on the one hand, the first minister, and the best friend of England.—On the other, the principal manager, and the nominal proprietor of Drury-lane Theatre.

On this hand, they have beheld a person of an extraction of which any exalted mind might be proud—which Britons revere, and which sheds a constant lustre around him; of an extraction which has been highly advantageous as well to his country, as to himself—it having been, in a remarkable manner, with him, as it was with some of the distinguished patriots of antiquity, of whom it is said, *cum majorum imagines intuerentur, vehementissime sibi animum ad virtutem accendi.*—

On that, one whose origin is mean, and ignoble—his father having hardly ever carried his views beyond those scenes, which his son, mistaking exceedingly the true cast of his genius, relinquished the moment he could so much as hope to find daily bread elsewhere; one, however, who, as well as Mr. Pitt, has profited by imitating the excellencies

of his father——having added to the celebrity of the drama, by the neatness of his compositions ; and having, on a memorable occasion, given eclat to the art of elocution, by exemplifying its beauties, for several successive days, in acting the forced part of *an enemy to political vice*.

On this hand, one whose companions, during all that time in which his illustrious father was training him up in the principles of genuine patriotism——nay, till the era of his being called upon to join in the administration of publick affairs, mindful of their rank, or of their fortune, or of the virtues of their ancestors, maintained with him that sort of intercourse of thoughts, and of actions, which is the best calculated to inspire the love of probity and honour.——On that, one who, having been accustomed, during his youth and early manhood, to the society of persons insignificant as to family and condition in life, cannot have been benefited through the influence of those dignified, native conceptions, which raise the soul so far above every thing base and indecorous : yet, one who has, at length, found out a way by which to creep into the presence of men of no ordinary eminence ; but who, nevertheless, still devotes (as the support of an artificial character, and the subsistence of his family require) most of his time to puffers, and players.

Here,

Here, one whose extraordinary share in many national concerns of the utmost magnitude, has given his mind a prevailing bias towards objects elevated, and grand.—There, one whose share in great national concerns, has sometimes been considerable; but, which, as it has always embraced the major part of whatever in them was crafty and seditious, must have given his mind a tendency towards things low, and little*.

* “ Crafty and seditious.” Mr. Sheridan has frequently been known to acquit himself with a degree of cunning, and refined address, which proves, that, while he has been availing himself of the instruction derived from his present connexions, he has not forgotten the lessons he had learned before any political man had condescended to associate with him. He has, in short, carried into the palace of an amiable prince, all the little oblique arts of his original low life. This was very apparent during the much lamented illness of the sovereign. At that juncture, Mr. Sheridan had wormed himself into the good opinion of certain great men, and of their friends, so effectually, that they sometimes appeared to be little else than the ministers of his will. Most of the envious, revengeful steps that were then taken by the leaders of the party, and which ultimately brought so much reproach on them, were dictated by him: and he undertook to be answerable for the issue of such of them as wore a dubious aspect. He was well qualified for such undertakings. For, he dreaded nothing merely because it was dangerous. He was the sordid bramble, under whose shade the cedars of Lebanon, and all the trees of the forest, were invited to come and take shelter.

Here,

Here, in fine, an accomplished statesman, and orator ;—whose life, though comparatively short, has been one of the greatest of blessings, and whose death would be one of the heaviest of calamities, not to his family solely, and to his friends ; but, to Britain, and to Europe,—There, an admired comick writer ; a most indefatigable compiler, and reciter of witty speeches ;—a man, whose life, it is to be hoped, is useful to his family, however burdensome it may be to some of his friends : but, unfortunately, one who cannot, by any possibility, render a service to Europe in general ; and, who can render an effectual one to Britain—only by quitting for ever her dominions. *Abiit, Catalina, excessit, evasit, erupit.* It will be well when his countrymen can pronounce thus of Mr. Richard Sheridan.

Let me now put this question, To the assertions of which of the two persons, whose characters are sketched in these sentences, is the greater degree of credit due ?

How came it to pass, that the alarming deficiency of the year 1784, should, in the year 1786, be found to have been converted into such a redundancy, as to render practicable the establishment of a Sinking Fund ? We had discovered no
mines

mines of gold: And the gems of the East have never been deposited in the publick Exchequer. By way of detracting from the deserts of the ministers of finance, their enemies have ascribed the happy change, almost entirely, to that elastick operation which has always been perceived, in the faculties of the empire, upon the termination of a war.—To this cause, unquestionably, much was owing. But, a great deal more was owing to the exercise of that integrity, and that wisdom, which had, for some time, been incessantly directed to the twofold object of enlarging the income, and diminishing the expences of the nation. In what manner this object was attained, my limited plan permits me not to inquire. It even prohibits me from exhibiting the evidence of its attainment—i. e. a statement of all the articles of revenue, and expenditure, of the year 1786; contrasted with one of all such articles belonging to the year (or four quarters) which ended at midsummer 1784. Yet, as it may be deemed proper that some evidence should be seen, I beg leave to refer to the various statements presented to parliament by a person not only, beyond all men, capable of presenting them accurately; but, from a regard to his great and unceasing responsibility, and to his high and honourable character, of all men the most likely to do so;—I mean, the Chancellor of his Majesty's Exchequer.

Each

Each succeeding year has brought the adverse parties to the contest, concerning the surplus of the revenue, with altered powers—the friends of government with increased strength, its enemies with increased weakness. So thoroughly convinced of this truth, have the latter been, for two or three sessions, that, during these, they have studiously avoided taking the sense of the House of Commons upon the question respecting the amount of the surplus. Each succeeding year, too, has helped to remove that film, which the most factious of the factious had been busied in fastening upon the eyes of the people; and, to convince mankind, “That every state will be delivered from its calamities, when, by the favour of fortune, great power unites with wisdom and justice, in one person.”

I shall treat the topick of despondency, with regard to commerce, very briefly.—However true those assertions may be, through which we have been taught to consider Sir Robert Walpole as the greatest disseminator of corruption; and as one of the most industrious and successful enemies of the independence of parliament, whom these ages have seen; it must be owned, that he seems to have felt much anxiety to add to the affluence of the nation; and, that foreign trade flourished, in an unprecedented degree, during his long, and
difficult

difficult administration. Yet, it was while he presided at the Treasury Board, that Lord Bolingbroke thought proper to write thus: "By trade and commerce we grew a rich and powerful nation, and by their decay we are growing poor and impotent*." In the year 1750, Sir M. Decker published a work, entitled, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of Foreign Trade*. From its title solely, those who are not already acquainted with it, may form an idea both of its spirit, and of its object. "We are going *headlong to destruction*," says he†, "with carrying on losing trades with our neighbours," &c. It would be an easy matter to prove, from the writings of various authors, and from the accounts which we have of the parliamentary proceedings, that Englishmen have been as deeply smitten with despondency since Sir M. Decker wrote, as they were when he did so. But I choose to add an example furnished in an early period, rather than one furnished lately.—An hundred and ten years ago, a performance appeared, which, like the one last quoted, conveys, in its name, an idea of its drift and contents. It is called *Britannia Languens*, or, a Discourse of

* Idea of a Patriot King.

† Page 161.

Trade. In his exordium, the author, after the manner of the more dignified epick poets, shortly proposes his subject: "Whilst every one," says he, "hath eagerly pursued his private interest, *"a kind of common consumption hath crawled upon us."* I shall only observe, that, if Britannia was found to be in a languishing, consumptive state, eight years before the revolution; her disorder could not have arisen from causes like those to which most of the modern repiners attribute her present (imaginary) debility—namely—the excessive augmentation of her debts, and taxes.

During our war with the Americans, many people were of opinion, that, with the monopoly of their market, we should lose, in a principal measure, the market itself; and not a few were of opinion, that the period of the loss of the monopoly, would be that of the commencement of a rapid decay of the general commerce of the empire. But, all such opinions were ill founded. A satisfying evidence of this fact, has been to be found at the Custom-house, in each year since the conclusion of the war. If so, what for an evidence of it, would a full, and fair statement of the commercial transactions of the last, or of the present year, be? It would be an irrefragable one. And that it would, will be admitted by all those who shall

shall attend to the numerous, and important advantages which our traders have enjoyed, in consequence of the interruptions to which the commerce of certain European nations has lately been subjected.

Were I to produce estimates of the quantity and the value, of the present exports and imports of Great Britain to, and from the various countries with which she trades, I should exhibit her commerce in a charming point of view. The task would be agreeable. But, it is unnecessary—hardly any body being so ill informed as not to know, that our commerce, considered as a whole, now flourishes; and none supposing that it has sustained much injury otherwise than through the independence of the Thirteen United States. I, therefore, decline it. It seems to me, that, if I make a few observations on our past, and our present intercourse with the United States, I shall do all that is requisite.

Our commerce suffered, while the revolted colonies belonged to us, from two causes: Their eagerness in extending the bounds of their foreign trade; and, our folly in contracting the bounds of ours, for the sake of the American monopoly.

The range of the commerce of the Americans was astonishingly wide, considering that they were but colonists. To the southward of Cape Finisterre, it was unlimited. They had well nigh engrossed the West India carrying trade; the annual profits of which amounted to 350,000*l*. This sum now comes into the pockets of those who remained firm in their allegiance to their sovereign.—Their traffick with the American subjects of Spain, and of Portugal, which they carried on, not only with the produce of their lands; and with fish; but, also, with manufactures, as well domestick as foreign, is said, by competent judges, to have yielded every year, a balance of considerably more than 300,000*l*. Such a traffick was valuable to them; and, as it was valuable to them, it would have been pleasing to us, had it not been of such a kind, that, exactly in proportion as they gained by it, we lost. It was chiefly contraband. Through it, they were tempted to withdraw much of their attention from the cultivation of their staple commodities; and to fix it on manufactures. They were led, through it, to injure the navy of Britain, by diminishing her carrying trade; and, to subtract from the duties payable to her government, by practising an infinity of frauds.

Our grand errors, relative to the commerce of America, consisted in setting too high a value on it;

it; and, in prosecuting it with so much ardour, as to render it impossible for us to attend duly to our commercial concerns in Europe. The British trade with the nations in the Levant, once so lucrative, was almost totally annihilated, in consequence of our partiality to the colonies. And, through this same partiality, our countrymen were injured, though probably in a smaller degree, in their intercourse with other nations. “ Though
 “ the wealth of Great Britain has increased very
 “ much since the establishment of the act of navigation, it certainly has not increased in the
 “ same proportion as that of the colonies. But
 “ the foreign trade of every country naturally
 “ increases in proportion to its whole produce;
 “ and Great Britain having engrossed to herself
 “ almost the whole of what may be called the
 “ foreign trade of the colonies, and her capital
 “ not having increased in the same proportion as
 “ the extent of that trade, she could not carry it
 “ on without continually withdrawing from other
 “ branches of trade. some part of the capital
 “ which had before been employed in them, as
 “ well as withholding from them a great deal
 “ more which would otherwise have gone to them.
 “ Since the establishment of the act of navigation,
 “ accordingly, the colony trade has been continually increasing, while many other branches
 “ of foreign trade particularly of that to other parts
 “ of

“ of Europe, have been continually decaying,
 “ Our manufactures for foreign sale, instead of
 “ being suited, as before the act of navigation,
 “ to the neighbouring market of Europe, or to
 “ the more distant one of the countries which lie
 “ round the Mediterranean sea, have, the greatest
 “ part of them, been accommodated to the still
 “ more distant one of the colonies, to the market
 “ in which they have the monopoly, rather than to
 “ that in which they have many competitors. The
 “ causes of decay in other branches of foreign
 “ trade, which, by Sir Mathew Decker, and other
 “ writers have been sought for in the excess and
 “ improper mode of taxation, in the high price of
 “ labour, in the increase of luxury, &c. may all
 “ be found in the overgrowth of the colony trade.
 “ The mercantile capital of Great Britain, though
 “ very great, yet not being infinite; and though
 “ greatly increased since the act of navigation, yet
 “ not being increased in the same proportion as
 “ the colony trade, that trade could not possibly
 “ be carried on without withdrawing some part
 “ of that capital from other branches of trade,
 “ nor consequently without some decay of those
 “ other branches *.”

In considering these circumstances, the idea of
 a compensation, for the revolt of the Thirteen

* Wealth of Nations, Vol. II. page 410.

Provinces, arises in one's mind. It occurs to him as an obvious truth, that, through multiplying and enlarging the channels of our trade, a quantity of wealth may flow into the kingdom, the amount of which may be greater than the amount of that which would flow into it were the number, and the dimensions, of those channels to be, now, as while we retained the monopoly of the commerce of the Provinces, not merely prevented from encreasing, but, in some cases, studiously lessened. Nay, this is, already, no matter of conjecture. It is a matter of fact, proved by experience; the state of the exports, and of the imports of Great Britain, since the return of peace, having made it evident, that her true commercial interests never were mistaken so much, as in the high preference at all times given, both by mercantile men, and by the legislature, to the North American traffick.

It is difficult to reflect much upon this traffick, without looking back upon the conduct of France. And, when one does look back upon it, he is instantly reminded of that of Spain under Philip the Second.

Philip thought to ruin the Dutch, by cutting off all communication between them and the Portuguese: and the Dutch themselves were of opinion,

opinion, that, if the blow did not destroy their trade, it would certainly go a great way towards doing so. But, what were the consequences of Philip's malignity? The Dutch pushed, with more than usual activity, their commerce with other nations: they caught a spark of that spirit of enterprise, which had recently led several European powers to greatness: in a word, they visited India; and got possession of those territories, which have since yielded to the Republick an almost incredible portion of affluence.

Now, the loss, not of the commerce (for our merchants maintain, with ease, their ascendant in the American markets) but of the sovereignty of the Thirteen Provinces, has already operated on the minds of the British, in a manner somewhat similar to that in which the expulsion of the Dutch from Portugal, did on their phlegmatick minds. It has induced them to appreciate more justly, and to preserve more anxiously, than they had been used to do, their immense Asiatick empire;—that empire which Mr. Dundas has again, and again, proved to be the brightest jewel that ever shone in the British diadem. It has been the cause, too, of their going in quest of wealth, and of an abode, to shores of the new world, unknown to all the departed races of its civilized inhabitants.

Nor has the operation of the loss of the sovereignty of the Provinces, as yet ceased. It is still likely to be productive of beneficial effects. To the spirit of enterprize, indeed, which distinguishes our countrymen, it cannot be expected to add much : for, that seems to have reached a height, above which it would be no easy matter to raise it. But this it may do—it may give a new direction to their spirit of enterprize ; and, consequently, lead them to extend their dealings to every market from which an adequate return can be had ; but, more especially, to such as are to be found in the Mediterranean. The present aspect of Europe is far from indicating, that it will always be difficult to draw riches from the disconsolate nations dwelling upon the upper coasts of that sea.

The wonder of a well-informed man will not be excited, by hearing one assert, even with the most unquestionable marks of truth, that the good fortune of this country is, at present, such, that her commerce is greater than that of any country in the world. For, he must know, that her commerce has many times exceeded that of any other country. But, it may excite his wonder, in no small degree, to be assured, that one may truly assert, that her commerce, at this day, exceeds the commerce of any other country—in a much

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higher proportion than it did at any past period.— By her inhabitants having, since the return of peace, caused merchandize to flow, in quick and ample streams, along its wonted channels; by their having ventured to overleap, or to throw down those barriers, which illiberal prejudices, and a most pernicious policy, had raised; by their having explored regions unfrequented till his present Majesty ascended the throne; and opened an intercourse with nations unheard of till that auspicious era: a valuable accession has been made to the resources of the regular trader, and of the mercantile adventurer of every denomination; and so vast a spread given to the navigation, and the general traffick of the empire, that there is not now a considerable space of any sea, or ocean, on which the colours of Great Britain do not wave; or a wind that blows that is not fraught with somewhat to bless her— with materials for perfecting her arts, for advancing her science, for augmenting her wealth, for encouraging her population, for heightening her splendour, or for eternizing her fame.

Numberless instances of despondency, with regard to the depopulation of this island; and to the decay of agriculture in almost every part of it; are to be found in those voluminous works, on the subject of political economy, that have appeared

appeared within the last fifty years. From several of them, I once thought of making extracts. But I have changed my mind. They are in many people's hands: and I am willing to be excused from undertaking so very dull a task—by flattering myself, that they are so well understood, that it would be quite superfluous to show, that most of the authors of them are far from being exempt from that pitiable weakness which so often leads men to despair of the commonwealth.

Dr. Price has laid before the publick, the substance of most of the idle complaints, which various authors have made, with regard to depopulation. And, it seems as if he had experienced much joy, not only in improving upon their complaints; but, in adding many of his own. The population of Great Britain, as exhibited in his gloomy page, is deplorable in no ordinary degree. But, his attempts—nay all the attempts that have been made—to prove that the number of the inhabitants of this island has decreased, are vain. How, indeed, can they be otherwise, since their object is to prove a false fact * ?

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* The population of these kingdoms has never been long in danger, except from a cause which has already been mentioned, viz. emigration to that country, which Dr. Price, and the admirers of his politicks, served, for many years, so zealously,

The labours of those who have bewailed the decay of agriculture, have sometimes been useful. They have been so, however, not because they have proved, that agriculture is either ill understood, or unsuccessfully practised (for the truth is, that it never was so thoroughly understood, and so successfully practised, as it is at present) ; but, because they have made it appear, that the proprietors of estates have, in too many instances, fallen into the mischievous error of thinking it proper to allow wealthy farmers to monopolize their lands.

One only master grasps a whole domain,
And half a tillage flints the smiling plain.

Thus Goldsmith, singular in making poetry subservient to politics, chose to express himself. But, it is probable, that he had formed a wrong estimate of the effects that result from the engrossing of farms. Of these, the want of tillage is neither the most common, nor the most pernicious. For, tillage, if not quite so extensive now as it formerly was, certainly is as much so as the melioration of the soil admits: and, while this is the

lously, and so greatly to the cost of their own despised country : I mean America. But, even that cause was insufficient to prevent our European fellow-citizens from multiplying.

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case, it is known to be a great deal more productive than it was at any former period. The poet spoke more justly, when he attributed the diminution of the number of our peasantry, to the circumstance of two, or more, farms being frequently thrown into one.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintain'd its man.
But times are alter'd; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn, where scatter'd hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth, and cumb'rous pomp repose.

Grant that the poet, as such, had a right to indulge a little in exaggeration; and these verses will do very well. Yet, one cannot but regret, that he did not condescend to tell us when "England's griefs began;" and, whether they were owing to any other causes than those fore evils—the prosperity of trade, and the accumulation of wealth. It is also to be regretted, that, as he mentioned so particularly those scenes of life in which the number of the actors had diminished, he did not judge it expedient to take some notice of those in which they had multiplied in a two-fold proportion.—A rood of ground to each man, was a wondrous small allowance. Those who have written expressly upon population, are
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more liberal. They have, and I believe with very safe consciences, assigned not one rood, but *four or five acres* to every man; yes, and as much to every woman.

Luxury has been the theme of the dissatisfied, and the despondent, as frequently as any evil either publick or private. Let us hear what they have said about it. — “ But we are doomed to
 “ be undone. Neither the plain reason of the
 “ thing, nor the experience of past ages, nor the
 “ examples we have before our eyes, can restrain
 “ us from imitating, not to say surpassing, the
 “ most corrupt and ruined people, in those very
 “ points of luxury that ruined them. Our gam-
 “ ing, our Operas, our Masquerades, are, in
 “ spite of our debts and poverty, become the
 “ wonder of our neighbours *.” — “ These man-
 “ ners, and this defect of principle, by weakening
 “ or destroying the national capacity, spirit of
 “ defence, and union, have produced such a ge-
 “ neral debility as naturally leads to destruction †.”
 “ — “ We have reason to think that these king-
 “ doms are unhappily experiencing some of the
 “ fatal effects of that luxury, which breeds licen-
 “ tiousness; and of that effeminacy and dissolute-

* The Bishop of Cloyne's Essay towards preventing the Ruin of Great Britain, p. 42.

† An Estimate of the Times, page 210.

“ nefs of manners which gradually brought on
 “ the destruction of the antient commercial
 “ states*.” Mr. Mortimer considers the commencement of our decay, as a people, as having taken place soon after the conclusion of the treaty of Paris. He thinks that, at that juncture, “ we
 “ may venture to pronounce that Great Britain
 “ was at the summit of national glory, and of
 “ human grandeur.” But, he alleges, that, in the year 1770, the decadence of the empire was become conspicuous. The other two ingenious authors think, that we had arrived at the summit —not of “ national glory, and human grandeur ;” but of “ degeneracy,” several years prior to the treaty of Paris. Now, if they complained of the want of national virtue, and vigour, only a short space before those victories were gained, by which so much lustre was shed upon the close of the reign of George the Second ; ought we to wonder at having heard some others of our countrymen complaining, in a similar strain, at more recent periods ?—A man who sits down in order to give vent to despondent ideas, will find specious grounds on which to erect them into a sort of system, at whatever time he write, or in whatever circumstances he behold the nation.

* Mortimer's Elements of Commerce, page 16.

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Although our luxury is, by no means, such as to render one, who is well versed in the history of nations, at all apprehensive about the publick safety; yet, it must be owned, that it is great.—We have much extravagance in sumptuary matters—in pageantry, sensuality, and amusements; of almost every kind. But, in what degree soever these prevail throughout the kingdom, we have to console ourselves, that their sway is moderate, where it was often excessive in such countries as have suffered severely through its effects—I mean—in the palace of the sovereign. Neither he, nor those who are the most instrumental in supporting his government, can justly be charged with vitiating the morals of the people by the force of example.—Let me add, our luxury is that which befits a polished nation. It corresponds with the stage of improvement at which we have arrived. It is what Montesquieu, and Hume, have justified and commended; and what they affirm we cannot possibly destroy, without first parting with our mixed monarchical constitution.

Luxury is compatible; not only with the advancement of the arts; but also with the increase of opulence. Nay, it is the legitimate offspring of opulence; and is every where salutary—till it reach an extreme point. Then, indeed, it becomes noxious—it becomes a disorder which
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nothing but poverty, the most unpalatable of all medicines, can cure. For my part, I would rather that we were very considerably affected by such a disorder, than that we should have recourse to such a remedy. I admire many of the institutions of Lycurgus. But, I shall never be biaſſed, through my admiration of them, ſo much—as to approve of any plan that may be propoſed for ſending the precious metals out of the kingdom. I will ſooner imitate the perſonage, who aimed at making them
 “ plenty as ſtones.”

It may be alleged, that the tendency of luxury is, to impair the faculties both of the body, and of the mind. But, if this be alleged, it ought at the ſame time to be acknowledged, that, in proſecuting thoſe expeditions, that are occasionally ſet on foot with a view to obtain the materials of luxury, many ſcenes of manly exertion are diſplayed; and many ſources of important knowledge opened.—We do not now find feebleneſs, or puſillanimity, prevailing, in an extraordinary meaſure, among individuals: and our countrymen betray no want either of energy, or of intrepidity, when they act in concert. Great Britain, in ſhort, exhibits none of the alarming fore-runners of a ſinking ſtate. On the contrary, that ſpirit of hardy, and hazardous adventure; that love of ingenious arts, and of ſublime ſciences; that thirſt of knowledg^e,
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which tempts men to seek the distant abode of the savage; that aspiration after glory, which makes them long to behold the face of an enemy; and that predilection for a free government, which stirs up the multitude to rend the heavens with their acclamations;—all these beautiful features of national character, distinguish her inhabitants, at this time, in a degree, perhaps, never equalled—certainly at no time ever exceeded.

I shall not have recourse to Mr. Fox, or to Mr. Burke, for proofs of the height to which political corruption had risen, during the administration of their noble friend Lord North: nor shall I cite Junius, as an evidence of the degree in which government was tainted, immediately before his Lordship was placed at the helm of state. Yet, I am inclined to furnish an example of the complaints of politicians, with regard to the corrupt practices of the present reign; and I offer the following on account of its comprehensiveness. It was written anno 1770. “ It must be owned,
 “ that the constitution has long been only nomi-
 “ nally government by King, Lords, and Com-
 “ mons, but really a tyranny of ambitious and
 “ avaricious *Ministers*, who have in succession,
 “ enslaved and blinded their Royal Masters, wasted
 “ the publick money, plunged the nation into
 “ inextricable debts and difficulties, multiplied

“ places and pensions, kept up large and expensive
 “ armies in time of peace, accumulated excises,
 “ misapplied taxes, irritated our colonies, injured
 “ commerce, endangered publick credit, de-
 “ bauched the virtue of the people, established
 “ corruption as a necessary engine of government,
 “ over-ruled elections, defeated the very end of
 “ choosing representatives, by debauching the
 “ House of Commons, the people’s only *palladium*
 “ against regal and ministerial tyranny, into a
 “ mere outwork of the Court, by which means
 “ the sense of the nation has been, in innumerable
 “ instances, trampled upon by the pretended re-
 “ presentatives of the people, whose duty is to fol-
 “ low it implicitly *.”

I shall take no notice of the lamentations, and
 the invectives of oppositionists, during the last years
 of the reign of the late king. I must, however,
 be allowed to attend, for a moment, to some
 things that were published during that period, in
 which Sir Robert Walpole had the guidance of
 affairs. Hear how Lord Bolingbroke expresses
 himself, respecting Sir Robert, and his friends.
 “ It is more to be wished than to be hoped, that
 “ the contagion should spread no further than
 “ that leprous race who carry on their skins, ex-

* Burgh’s Political Disquisitions, Vol. I. page 406.

posed to publick sight, the scabs and blotches
 of their distemper. The *Minister* preaches cor-
 ruption aloud and constantly, like an impudent
 missionary of vice; and some there are who
 not only insinuate, but teach the same occa-
 sionally. I say some, because I am as far from
 thinking, that all those who join with him, as
 that any of those who oppose him, wait only
 to be more authorized that they may propagate
 it with greater success, and apply it to their own
 use, in their turn."——" These judgments, and
 these reasonings, may be expected in an age
 as futile and as corrupt as ours; in an age
 wherein so many betray the cause of liberty,
 and act not only without regard, but in direct
 opposition to the most important interests of
 their country; not only occasionally, by sur-
 prize, by weakness, by strong temptation, or
 sly seduction; but constantly, steadily, by de-
 liberate choice, and in pursuance of principles
 they avow and propagate; in an age when so
 many others shrink from the service of their
 country, or promote it coolly and uncertainly,
 in subordination to their own interest and
 humour, or to those of a party."——" The
 men I speak of contend, that it is not enough
 to be vicious by practice and habit, but that it
 is necessary to be so by principle. They make
 themselves missionaries of faction as well as of
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“ corruption : they recommend both, they deride
 “ all such as imagine it possible or fit, to retain
 “ truth, integrity, and a disinterested regard to
 “ the publick in publick life, and pronounce
 “ every man a fool who is not ready to act like
 “ a knave *.” So much for the political depravity of the late reign.

The reign of *George the First*, also, presents its catalogue of corrupt practices.—*Queen Anne’s* does the same.—When then did corruption begin to seize upon our government? Under *William the Third*? No: for it had manifested itself long before he appeared in England.—*Bolingbroke*, speaking even of the fourteenth century, says, “ Upon the whole, the arbitrary will
 “ of a rash, headstrong Prince, and the suggestions
 “ of his wicked Ministers, guided the proceedings
 “ of Parliament, and became the law of the land.
 “ I might pursue observations of the same kind
 “ through several succeeding reigns; but to avoid
 “ lengthening these letters, which are grown
 “ perhaps too long already, let us descend at once
 “ to the reign of *King Charles the Second* †.”

* *Patriot King*, pages 72, 112, 182. Proofs of some of these assertions, are to be found in the notes to *Mr. Pope’s third ethick epistle*, Book II.

† *Dissertation upon Parties*, page 122.

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His Lordship does so ; and I shall follow his example —judging it unnecessary to touch upon that abominable system of controul, which, under such forms as suited their respective reigns, was exercised, over the two Houses of Parliament, by some of the Henries, Mary, Elizabeth, &c.

“ Charles the Second is thought to be the first
 “ king who bought the votes of Members of Par-
 “ liament *.” —We all know to what pernicious
 extremes James the Second proceeded, in his
 eagerness to debauch Parliament. —And Brown,
 in his Estimate of the Principles of the Times,
 says, “ That William the Third silenced all he
 “ could, by places, or pensions: and hence the
 “ origin of *making of Parliaments* †,” I have
 to add Mr. Burgh’s account of King William’s
 unjustifiable conduct. “ From discoveries made
 “ anno 1695, it was suspected that an uni-
 “ versal corruption had overspread the nation,
 “ court, camp, city, and Parliament.” —“ The
 “ corruption introduced in King William’s time,
 “ on pretence of buying off the Jacobites, was so
 “ openly scandalous, that honest Burnet remon-
 “ strated to the King upon it, with almost as much
 “ severity as the old Prophet used in reproving

* Burgh’s Political Disquisitions, Vol. I. page 389.

† Vol. I. page 109.

" King David for murder and adultery. And
 " good reason he had for using severity. A
 " Dutchman comes over to Britain, on pretence
 " of delivering us from slavery ; and makes it
 " one of his first works to plunge us into the very
 " vice which has enslaved all the nations of the
 " world that have ever lost their liberties. When
 " the Parliament passed a bill for incapacitating
 " certain persons who might be supposed obvious
 " to court influence, from sitting in Parliament,
 " our glorious deliverer refused the Royal assent,
 " which occasioned some severe resolutions against
 " the advisers of that refusal, and a motion for a
 " remonstrance to the King upon it. When an
 " enquiry was afterwards set on foot, into the
 " venality of Parliament, such a scene of iniquity
 " was opened as made the pension-parliament of
 " Charles the Second seem innocent, and the
 " court was then thought to have arrived at the
 " *ne plus ultra* of corruption. If King William
 " had been as disinterested as he ought, and as he
 " pretended, he would not have closeted members,
 " nor promoted bribery. No man will dare
 " damnation for the sake of doing good to *others*,
 " unless he thinks to get or keep, some advantage
 " to himself*."

* Burgh's Political Disquisitions, Vol. I. pages 403, 411.

At what time political corruption began to exist among the English, none can ascertain. This much, however, is well known, that it has had its being among them——ever since the people were of considerable moment in the legislature.—Henry VIII. Mary I. and Elizabeth, were great corrupters. Yet they made more use of intimidation, than of corruption.—The Stuarts, milder, but not less ambitious, than many of their predecessors, preferred corruption to intimidation. And, by the time at which William the Third ascended the throne, it was found, that the latter had become both an ineffectual, and a dangerous engine, in the hands of sovereigns. It was, therefore, laid aside by him: nor has it been resumed during the present century.—The former has not shared a similar fate. It has been employed in every reign since the revolution; though in neither the mode, nor the measure, which most people have supposed.

I pass by former reigns, that I may have an opportunity of saying a few words of the present.——These men are said to practise corruption in the dispensation of honours, and the distribution of offices;——honours, by the way, which it is incumbent on them to grant in a proportion that cannot wisely be fixed; and offices which must
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necessarily be bestowed upon some description of persons, or another; while those, having nothing substantial to spare to their adherents, practise the same vice, by an incessant application of that powerful instrument, hope. Thus it is, that both those who are, and those who have been courtiers, try to attain their ends.—But, as many senators who would spurn at the appellation of courtiers, yet sometimes have in view ends similar to theirs; so, they sometimes adopt similar means. Hence, one might, at any juncture in the present reign, have pointed to several characters of the greatest consideration among their countrymen, and then have said with the strictest regard to truth—those persons, highly respected and respectable as they are, have, instead of desiring to be paid for their attendance in parliament as members formerly were, pledged their influence, and squandered their fortunes, in biasing the judgments of their constituents.—Yet, in spite of all such circumstances, and notwithstanding the daily surmises of those unhappy men—the out-door patriots, I declare, that, I see no reason for not saying of this parliament, what Colonel Barré, in speaking of Indian affairs, in the spring of 1788, said of the last, viz. “ I believe in my conscience, that
 “ Great Britain never had a more independent,
 “ and honest legislature than she has at present.”

To a considerable portion of political corruption, we must always submit. Mr. Paley judiciously intimates, that nothing but absolute virtue, which we cannot attain ; or absolute power, which we cannot brook ; ever can rid us of it. England has, for several centuries, felt its effects ; but, at no time, during many centuries, seems she to have felt them less than she does at this day.

He who purposes enquiring into the degree in which England now feels the effects of the evil in question, ought to be aware, that it is customary, not only with statesmen who have been stript of their emoluments, and their patronage ; but also with those less conspicuous characters, who flatter themselves with the hopes of being regarded, either as the projectors of important political schemes, or as the principal supporters of those who have projected such schemes ; when they no longer find it possible to promote corruption, forthwith to fasten upon those who have been entrusted with the management of affairs—charging them with every species, and every measure of corrupt conduct.—It matters not to such persons, that those whom they attack, are infinitely more virtuous than they are. They pretend, that they are actuated by nothing but their anxiety to preserve the purity of our glorious constitution. This ancient edifice, they allege, is at length greatly defaced.

defaced. Nay, some of them who possess crazy imaginations, speak of it as if it were nothing else than a heap of ruins—in surveying which they indicate emotions, not unlike those which antiquarians feel, when they lament over the ruins of the temple of the sun.

Certain acts appear in the history of nations, the motives to which it is not easy to discover. When one, for instance, observes, that the freedom of Athens was sometimes given to the man who could invent the best flavoured, and most poignant sauce; and, that it was not uncommon, with the inconsiderate inhabitants of that renowned city, to consume in publick feasts, and theatrical representations, all the wealth which they had amassed for the purpose of defending the republick; he finds himself at a loss to determine, whether luxury, or political corruption, urged the more powerfully to such acts.

But, no difficulty, of a similar nature, can arise out of the proceedings of the English.—The Corporation of the City of London, proverbial as is their solicitude about the well-being of the stomach, never have offered the freedom of the metropolis for so vile a price as that demanded by the Athenian magistrates: and our Parliament has,

at no time, voted rewards to those who have excelled——only in the art of cookery.——As to our theatres, they are not supported by the decrees of our senators: *per contra*, there is among us a senator, who derives his support from the theatres;——who gathers money, where others throw it away. Let it not, however, be suspected, either that this personage is enslaved to avarice; or, that his virtue is endangered, through the possession of enormous wealth. He is not avaricious. And, it is a fact, not at all questionable, that, were his country to be bereft of him to-morrow, mankind would be justified in observing, respecting him, what historians have recorded as an evidence of the virtue of one of the most meritorious of all the ancients, viz. “ That although he was occasionally employed in managing the finances of his country; yet, he died so poor—as not to leave wherewithal to bury him.”

It has again, and again, been asserted, that the national character of the English is extinct. But I have not been able to discover on what ground such an assertion rests. To me, indeed, it appears, that the opinions, the sentiments, and the practices, on which their national character chiefly depends, are as prevalent now, as they ever were.

Those who wish to be furnished with instances of that blunt, downright deportment, by which Englishmen, of the lower and middle orders, have frequently been distinguished, will find an abundance of them every where in the country; and not a few in our principal towns, and our cities. As to the manners of the great, they seem to differ but very little from those which, according to Mr. Addison, characterised persons of quality in former reigns.

Diversions, which go so far towards forming the character of every people, are, in England, at this day, pretty much what they were in the days of our early ancestors. For one evidence of this, I refer to those boxing matches, of which we have lately heard so much.—— These are a partial restoration of the feats of ancient, hardy, vigorous times. I know, by the way, that as similar amusements are common among savage nations, the prevalence of them among us may be accounted a mark of rude manners: but, I also know, that some of the pursuits of savages, are worthy of the attention of a maritime, and military people. I am aware, that the exhibitions of the gladiators at Rome, were an indication of national degeneracy: but, let it be remarked, that we have witnessed no exhibitions
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in this country, which resemble the sanguinary, and fatal ones of the Roman gladiators; and, that our boxers do now, only what was very commonly done in the reigns of Queen Anne, and George the First. Individual bravery is improved by such contests; and individual bravery is nearly allied to national bravery. They spring from kindred feelings, and passions. That which promotes the one, must be favourable to the other: a people who excel in the one, cannot be deficient in the other. I am far from wishing to be thought an advocate for boxing: for I am convinced, that it has often been prejudicial both to industry, and to morality. Yet, the degree in which it now obtains, renders it such an evidence as that wanted; and it is, otherwise, as useful as I have alleged it to be. I venture to add, that there is not one of the rencounters that have taken place between our noted pugilists, which has not been of a thousand times more advantage to the empire—than all our famous commemorations of Handel.

But, almost the whole of that part of the character of the English which is owing to their diversions, has lately been threatened with destruction. In endeavouring to bring about an equalization of the various ranks of society, certain persons, (happily not very powerful) have hinted

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at the adoption of means, calculated to deprive the superiour ranks of their more manly sports; and, in seeking to demonstrate their chymical skill, in converting all the bells, and the bell-metal of the kingdom, into the signs of assignats—to abolish holidays, &c.—they have tried to debar the inferiour ranks from those favourite pastimes, which rejoiced the hearts of their forefathers many ages, and centuries ago.—Nay, they have let us understand, that, whenever their principles shall come to operate fully upon government, even that strong feature in the character of the British, which arises from the predilection they individually manifest for their respective places of nativity, will disappear—in consequence of government's being foolish enough to break down our shires, and our counties, into departments.—Let it, however, be remembered, that there are some things, by which the inhabitants of this country were wont to be distinguishable from the inhabitants of other countries, to which the lovers of innovation are by no means hostile—namely: *clubs*. In these, they do not merely join, with moderate men, in ordinary acts of conviviality: They also do the business of priests, and of parishes in them; and show a disposition to render them scenes for the exercise of the functions of kings, and of parliaments.

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The promptitude of our countrymen, to contribute liberally towards the endowment of charitable institutions, is as conspicuous now, as it ever was.

Nor seems their aptitude to engage in such schemes as promise a remote gain only, to be diminished. As proofs of this fact, I mention the projects of trading to Nootka; of cultivating Sierra Leona; and, I may add, of colonizing New Holland—where something else, than a fit receptacle for culprits, is, doubtless, expected to be found.

Of the nature of this passion for adventure, is that spirit of enterprize which has so often induced our countrymen to court toil, and danger. This is far from having evaporated. It has appeared very active since the close of that period*, during which it was said to have risen to the greatest possible height. Subsequently to that period, our countrymen have exerted it on principles the most disinterested, and honorable. They have exerted it, in a great measure, without having had the love of power for their motive, or lucration for their object. “The noble plan of discovery,” says the pro-

* That in which the war of 1755 was carried on.

foundly

foundly learned Bishop of Salisbury, in his Introduction to Captain Cook's last Voyage, "so
 " steadily and so successfully carried on, since the
 " accession of his present Majesty, cannot fail to
 " be considered, in every succeeding age, as a
 " splendid period in the history of our country;
 " and to add to our national glory, by distinguish-
 " ing Great Britain as taking the lead, in the most
 " arduous undertakings for the common benefit of
 " the human race."

The last trait in the character of my countrymen which I shall mention, is, their love of liberty. There are nations who have, at no time, felt this noble passion. There are some who once felt it; and yet suffered it to expire—perhaps for ever. And there are others, who, after having felt it, suffered it to expire; but who are now anxiously fanning its sacred embers. Far otherwise has it been with Englishmen. Free in the beginning, they have been comparatively free throughout the whole of their duration: they are, at the present hour, rationally and usefully free, beyond any people on the face of the earth; and they will continue to be free—or they will not care to be at all. Freedom, it thus appears, has been enjoyed by them, not only in a remarkable, but also in a peculiar manner.

L

I deem

I deem it unnecessary to offer any proof of the quickness, and the energy, of that spirit which moves them to raise the voice in behalf of popular privileges. It must ever be both very quick, and very energetick, while an unprincipled demagogue finds it practicable, upon the mere ground of surmise, or of vague assertion, to draw forth hundreds from their abodes ; to induce them to clamour against government ; and, to prevail upon them to make a stand against the legislature of their country. I speak not of such numbers of citizens, as if I reckoned them bad subjects. I allude to them, and to the tricks that are put upon them, merely to show the keen feelings, and the ardour of spirit, which they must possess ; since any factious beggar has it always in his power to fill them with such emotions as one would expect to find in them——only when upon the point of being bereft of all that they value, or love.

The departure of virtue from these realms, has been proclaimed, under the title of The Decay of Piety and Morality, from times immemorial. It has always been the theme of the divine : and it has, occasionally, been made that of the politician. In our own days, there are persons who are continually harping upon this string ; and professing to be convinced, that no times ever were so flagitious as those in which they have the misfortune

fortune to live. As such persons sometimes act from conscience, I have a wish to inform them how their errors, upon this head, may be corrected. This wish leads me to observe, that, if they will take the trouble of enquiring into the nature of the offences that were once the most common in this island; of looking into the licenses anciently granted to the keepers of brothels; of examining the Royal Proclamations that used to be issued for the suppression of vice; and of perusing the essays of the moralists, and the sermons of the churchmen, of past ages and centuries; they will find, that our ancestors had by no means less reason to complain than we have: nay, I undertake to answer for it, that, if the days of our ancestors, and those in which we live, be fairly compared, it will appear, that, in the former, society was not only more disfigured, than it is in the latter, by detestable crimes; but also less adorned with amiable virtues.

We have now heard the strains in which authors, and orators, have expressed their despondency with regard to single topics. I am next to offer a few examples of the querulousness of such men, while they have been contemplating not any particular topic, but the affairs of the nation in general.

“ We remember when it was otherwise, when
 “ there was a far greater plenty of money in all
 “ our inferior cities, corporations, and villages;
 “ when our farmers had their rents before hand,
 “ and had stocks for every farm; when they and
 “ our manufacturers got estates, and when vast
 “ taxes could be readily raised; and therefore are
 “ the most proper judges of the odds, who feel
 “ the present scarcity, and want of money; they
 “ cannot conspire in a falsity of this nature; but in
 “ so general and near a concern, the voice of
 “ the people hath been taken to be like the speech
 “ of God. Those that find their stocks wasted,
 “ or much contracted, their late revenues sunk,
 “ their home commodities yield much less value,
 “ their labours in manufactures turn to less profit,
 “ or to none at all, the poor and their mainte-
 “ nances vastly increased, the nation involved in
 “ debts, money very hard to be gotten or raised
 “ in the way of home trade, with other common
 “ hardships, cannot be argued out of their senses*.”
 This was the language of the dissatisfied even
 before the Revolution. Let us attend to what
 the Bishop of Cloyne wrote anno 1752.

“ Whether the prosperity that preceded, or
 “ the calamities that succeed the South Sea pro-

* Britannia Languens, page 222.

“ jest have most contributed to our undoing,
 “ is not so clear a point as it is that *we are actually*
 “ *undone.*” “ We have been long preparing for
 “ *some great catastrophe.* Vice and villainy have
 “ by degrees, grown reputable among us; our
 “ infidels have passed for fine gentlemen, and our
 “ venal traitors for men of sense, who knew the
 “ world. We have made a jest of publick spirit,
 “ and cancelled all respect for whatever our laws
 “ and religion repute sacred. The old English
 “ modesty is quite worn off, and, instead of blush-
 “ ing for our crimes, we are ashamed only of piety
 “ and virtue. In short, other nations have been
 “ wicked, but we are the first who have been
 “ wicked upon principle The truth is,
 “ our symptoms are so bad, that, notwithstanding
 “ all the care and vigilance of the legislature, it
 “ is to be feared, *the final period of our state up-*
 “ *proaches*.*”——About five years afterwards,
 an animated writer observed: “ By a gradual and
 “ unperceived decline, *we seem gliding down to*
 “ *ruin.* We laugh, we sing, we feast, we play:
 “ We adopt every vanity, and catch at every
 “ lure thrown out to us by the nation that
 “ is planning our destruction; and, while fate

* An Essay towards preventing the Ruin of Great Britain,
 pages 31 and 51.

“ is hanging over us, are fightless, and thence
 “ secure *.”

It appears then, that, but a short time before the Revolution; and, also, that only a little space before the year 1763; there were some of the inhabitants of this happy island who complained of her lot, and despaired of her safety. How have they deported themselves since the latter of these eras? What think they, and what say they, of their country now? Let us hear them?

“ There is that ultimate point, which all finite
 “ human affairs arrive at, in their advances to
 “ perfection, beyond which there is no proceed-
 “ ing in the same direction, but from which they
 “ have their retrograde motion, and invariably
 “ return to the same, or a similar state, to that
 “ from whence they rose. That point Britain
 “ has seen, and, fatally for it, has now past †.”
 This is bad enough, God knows.—Dr. Edwards comes not in the least short of the writer of the Reflections. He observes, “ That he sees with
 “ intuitive certainty the distressful situation which

* An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times, page 144.

† Reflections Moral and Political, pages 184, 216.

“ his

" his country, in a short time, must unavoidably
 " experience; he beholds too many of his country
 " blind to its too inevitable destiny, and weakly
 " proud and erroneously triumphant in the pre-
 " sent hour; as if the loss of the United States
 " of America, was not the forerunner of a still
 " greater concussion of the British empire, and
 " produced by causes, which will have still more
 " powerful and dreadful operations; as if the
 " finances of the kingdom could be further accu-
 " mulated, without causing general poignant dis-
 " tress, and intolerable misery." . . . " May
 " Britains, therefore," the Doctor exclaims, " at-
 " tend in time to the various arguments on the
 " subject which occur in almost every page of
 " this work, and be at last persuaded, in despite
 " of the fond, endearing, yet at the same time
 " the weakest and worst founded of partialities,
 " which flatter every human bosom with too high
 " an opinion of their native country, that *the*
 " *British empire is at last verging to its destruction,*
 " and can only be saved by the accomplishing of
 " its national perfection*." Alas Doctor! you
 offer your poor country salvation on very hard
 terms. Can nothing short of perfection—of that
 which is absolutely unattainable—rescue her from

* Letters on the Aggrandisement, &c. of Great Britain, pages 4, 64.

destruc-

destruction?—But, of all the whiners of whom I have either read or heard, the most thorough, and systematick, is still to be named. He is no other than Mr. Richard Champion, who was Deputy Paymaster General while the dominion of the Coalition lasted. “The God of heaven, says he, “is displeased with us, and has withdrawn “from us his gracious protection. The “times in which we live are attended with very “aggravated circumstances. We have sunk from “an immense power and greatness. Driven “about by jarring elements, I flee for my life “from the violence of the storm*.” Whither does the patriot flee? and from what storm? To America; and from a storm which, though it seemed to him to threaten his valuable life seven years ago, has not yet been felt by any living creature. Let us take him somewhat in detail: it will be amusing to accompany him in his progress. “The affairs of Great Britain, “which have been for many years in a dangerous “situation, *are now advancing rapidly to a crisis.* “I do not remember any period in her history, “since she has called herself a great nation, which “has afforded so many solid grounds of apprehension for the event. As an individual, anxiously “concerned for her welfare, I feel a most sensible

* Comparative Reflections, &c. pages 226, 23, 344.

“ regret

“ regret when I reflect how closely she has brought
 “ herself to *the precipice of irrecoverable ruin* *.”

—By way of showing that he really is not in
 jest, he resolves upon quitting his country. “ I
 “ am going to take refuge in America, with a
 “ numerous family. I do it thus early (anno
 “ 1784—a few months after he had been turned
 “ out of his place) lest the difficulties, already
 “ great in England, should increase to such a
 “ degree, as to make the removal of a family
 “ unpleasant and inconvenient †.” —On leaving
 the Lizard, he says, “ Peace and tranquillity sat
 “ upon the bosom of the vast Atlantick, and
 “ pointed out the way we were to go; whilst the
 “ gathering distant clouds, which hung over the
 “ land, seemed to tell us, that it was time to
 “ leave infatuated Britain. I tremble for you,
 “ and for the excellent friends whom I have left
 “ behind me; and from whom, had I been a
 “ single individual, I could not, without difficulty,
 “ have torne myself: and I offer my most fervent
 “ prayers to that Almighty Being who holds
 “ the scale of empires, that your woes may be
 “ light; and that when our country comes, in
 “ *the approaching crisis*, to be weighed in the
 “ balance, she may be so thoroughly purged from

* Comparative Reflections, &c. page 3.

† Page 5.

" her dross, as to appear again with brighter
 " lustre*."——What a fine picture does Mr.
 Champion exhibit of a modern Whig ! By
 groundless complaints, he endeavours to repress the
 spirit, and to interrupt the enjoyments, of the
 British people. Nor is this all. At the very
 moment in which he is professing attachment
 to his native country, he unblushingly lays
 down a plan for facilitating the emigration
 of her husbandmen, and artificers. How base
 is such a conduct ! None but a distempered
 Whig could have been guilty of it.——
 It must be confessed, however, that he compen-
 sates, in some measure, for this offence, by re-
 commending to disappointed patriots, and to
 persons of shattered fortunes, to follow his ex-
 ample in going into exile ; and, by giving the
 world reason to hope, that " The American
 " forests shall receive the awful remains of English
 " Whigs."

Upon the whole, this man seems to have had
 no sincere friendship for Great Britain. But how-
 ever this might be, there has at no time occurred
 any reason for doubting of his attachment to the
 Thirteen United States. In this respect, he equals,

* Comparative Reflections, pages 12 and 13.

perhaps

perhaps he excels, even Dr. Price. He frequently contrasts the increasing eminence, and the felicity of the States; with the depression, and the wretchedness of these kingdoms. He pays the former a thousand compliments. He celebrates their industry, their courage, their virtue—to say every thing—their whiggism. And, when he has done all this, he passes an eulogium on the French Court, for having abetted them in their rebellion; and expresses indignation against Lord North, and all the rest of his countrymen, who, at any time, tried to disconcert their schemes. Being about to fix his residence among the Americans, it was prudent in him to use every expedient to render them propitious. But, there is a reason for his view into the impending ruin of Britain, and the destined prosperity of America, being so uncommonly clear and pervasive, which does not appear upon the face of his publication. It is this: The present Ministry refused him the American Consulship. The Coalition had promised him the appointment; and, as he loved America more than he did Great Britain, he was, perhaps, a very proper person to be sent thither as the guardian of the British interests,

This fugitive patriot has become the enemy of his native country, for a reason that reminds one of that which induces most of his friends here to

oppose her government. They were deprived of their places: he was refused one. It is by the operation of causes like these, that almost every modern Whig has been metamorphosed into a Thermites.

Strike off his pension — by the setting sun,
And Britain, if not Europe, is undone.

A woman, who had long laboured under the whiggish malady, crossed the Atlantick, in order to legislate for the United States. On her arrival, she was not neglected; but she was derided, and despised. I will answer for it, that Mr. Champion has been treated in a similar manner,

Let one of us forget, for a while, that, from the era of our glorious Revolution, Great Britain has gradually advanced from a state of considerable respectability, to one of, perhaps, unexampled grandeur; and let him, during his oblivion, attend duly to the writings, and the harangues of political wailers; on doing so, what conclusion is he the most likely to draw? What? but this—that his country, throughout the whole of that long, and, on the whole, extremely fortunate period, has been rapidly declining; and is, at length, totally undone.—But, on the other hand,

hand, let him weigh the ideas of our wailers, with the principal events of these latter ages fresh in his recollection, and he will conclude very differently. He will then, in all probability, be perverse enough to declare, that he delights in the ruin to which his country has been subjected—since it resembles that of the Egyptian Thebes, in which there is said to have been found, immediately after the Persians sacked and burned it, a quantity of silver and gold far exceeding that contained in any cotemporary city.

What are the causes of those multifarious, ill-founded complaints, to which we have been attending?

A certain disposition of the human mind is one of them.—The aged are apt to form extravagant notions of their own wisdom, and importance. They will, sometimes, allow the attainments of departed generations to have been high: but, then, they greatly under-rate those of the rising generation; and they insist, that the continuance of time will constantly increase the difference of the degrees of excellence subsisting between those who are young, and those who are old, and between the latter, and those who have passed away.

Damnosa

Damnosa quid non imminuit dies ?

Ætas parentum, pejor avis, tulit

Nos nequiores, mox daturos

Progeniem vitiosorem.

By a parity of reasoning, the prosperity of these times is held to be less than the prosperity of former times; but greater than that of future times. "The conversation soon after turned to politicks. Said an old Lord, the State is no longer governed; point me out now, such a Minister as Monsieur Colbert; he was one of my friends; he always ordered the pay of my pension before it was due: in what good order did he keep the finances! every body was at ease, but now we are ruined*." In short, the effect of distance of past time upon political objects is, to magnify them; while the effect of distance of future time upon such objects, like that produced by remoteness of situation upon matter, is to diminish them.—This observation might, with sufficient propriety, be introduced into the science of morals. If it were, we should be enabled to comprehend the reason of our receiving so implicitly as we do, the unbounded panegyrics often pronounced upon the inhabitants of the ancient world? We readily grant, that most of

* Persian Letters, page 119.

them

them possessed the strength of giants, the magnanimity of heroes, and the purity of angels. But, we submit to have it said of ourselves, that we are, in almost every respect, a very degenerate race of mortals.

A certain disposition of the British nation, is also one of the causes of those complaints.—I do not ascribe this unfortunate disposition of my countrymen, to any thing in the original conformation of their minds. It seems to be owing, in some measure, to the atmosphere that surrounds them; and the qualities of their sustenance: but, in a principal measure, to the English Constitution, which, while it generates parties, as well religious as civil, and admits of almost an unbounded freedom both in speaking and writing, lays splendid emoluments and honours open before the subjects; and, consequently, exposes hundreds, and thousands, to solicitude, disappointment, or chagrin.—But, querulousness, and an unhappy prophetick spirit, attend the progeny of our ancestors in every clime. “It is,” said Mr. Justice Pendleton, in his charge to some of the Grand Juries of South Carolina, delivered in December 1786, “It is a painful task to anticipate publick calamities, however inevitable, because some are too indolent to think about them—others too closely engaged in their private affairs, to
“ spare

“ spare a moment to those of the publick, while
 “ others even wish for times of disorder and con-
 “ vulsion — but with us, gentlemen, it is not
 “ anticipation — the mortification of the body
 “ politick is actually begun, and is driving ra-
 “ pidly to all the seats of life. — I repeat it again,
 “ that without a change of conduct, and a union
 “ of all the good men in the State, we are an
 “ undone people, and that the Government will
 “ soon tumble about our heads.” — Why are
 the descendants of Englishmen every where haunted
 by querulousness, and an unhappy prophetick spi-
 rit? Why — but because they every where study
 the history of Englishmen; and imitate their
 modes not only of living, and of governing;
 but, also, of thinking, and of expressing them-
 selves.

Let me be just to my countrymen. They are
 not the only people in the world who lament un-
 reasonably, and prophesy falsely. Of this fact,
 one of the wisest men, who ever belonged to that
 nation from which the charge of English despon-
 dency has proceeded in the most remarkable
 manner, has furnished us with a notable evidence.
 “ The splendour of a monarchy is short and
 “ transitory. France is already sunk into misery
 “ and disgrace; an age more will annihilate her,
 “ or she will fall a prey to the first intrepid
 “ con-

"conqueror*." This complaint, and this prediction, were made more than *two* ages ago. Now, if so great a man as Montesquieu has complained without cause; and foretold an event, the period of the completion of which appears more remote, even in these days, than it did in his; what regard ought we to suppose due to any ordinary repiner? what credit to any ordinary prophet?

The plaintive expressions with which we are deafened, are frequently the result of ignorance, or of credulity; and, not unfrequently, of villany.

They often spring from the zeal of those, who, being occupied in civil matters, are anxious that it should be understood, that their hearts, as well as their heads, are devoted to the publick service. They spring from a zeal—the object of which is sometimes to benefit the nation; but, many times, to benefit the zealots themselves: from a species of zeal, which, upon the whole, is a misfortune to the empire—it being to her, in most cases, what the tender mercy of a wicked man is to the afflicted.

They proceed, occasionally, from the desire which speculators have, not only to be considered

as the authors of new systems; but, also, to be called upon to assist in reducing them to practice.

—Dr. Edwards, for instance, describes affairs as being in a most disastrous state; and yet he exclaims, “Fortunate nation! thy publick debt is small, when compared with thy real wealth, thy vast empire,” &c. He acts thus, because, while he believes his countrymen to be indeed “fortunate,” he hopes that he shall succeed in getting himself acknowledged as the inventor of a sovereign remedy for national evils; and, consequently, be requested to appear before the publick, for the purpose of trying to accomplish “our national perfection.”

But, such expressions are owing, more than to all other causes, to the exclusion of the ambitious from a share in the management of publick affairs. Give to most men the guidance of the helm—and all is well: the kingdom flourishes at home; and is revered abroad. But, deprive them of that honour—and the condition of things is instantly changed:

Urbs antiqua ruit crudelis ubique

Luctus, ubique pavor, et plurima mortis imago.*

“In

* Although the principals of the Coalition neither were the first, nor are likely to be the last, to merit the blame attaching

“ In the grave,” says some departed writer,
 “ the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary
 “ are at rest.” Where is it that politicians cease

attaching to the crime of misrepresenting the condition of things, by using colours of too dark a hue; yet, it must be owned, that they merit such blame in a very high degree. If any one wishes to become well acquainted with the nature of the motives by which they are actuated in their frequent and extravagant misrepresentations, he cannot do better than attend to the view given, in Lord Melcolme's Diary, of the springs of the conduct of the faction which Frederick Prince of Wales headed against the late King's government. By attending to it, he will be fully enabled to comprehend the nature of those motives: and he will be instructed in the best modes of exciting popular discontent and clamours against Ministry, with regard not solely to domestick occurrences, but likewise to foreign negotiations. For, in those times, (happily for the tranquillity of the nation, their example has *not* been followed) the opposition, not satisfied with straining every nerve to obstruct the course of the ordinary business of the State; incurred great expences in paying persons for acting as their envoys, or spies, at different courts of Europe.—“ I supposed,” said Lord Melcombe, speaking of the Prince, (Diary, p. 34.) “ I supposed, that though I was “ so unfortunate as not to be ready, His Royal Highness was “ well informed of all things necessary to make out the charge. “ He said no; but the throwing it out would make the Ministry “ feel they had *la corde au col*, and it was an opportunity to “ abuse them.” *An opportunity to abuse them!* What a noble motive! Even “ The Prince's jester,” though, as a Member of Parliament, much more deserving of commendation for something else, than for his wit;—even he might be supposed to want modesty, were he to avow a motive of such rare excellence,

from troubling the repose of their fellow-citizens ; and find a point of rest ? In office. Office, therefore, is to such persons a grave. Yet, it is one that differs, in many particulars, from the house appointed for all living. It is sought for alike by the good, and by the bad. Its mansions are not numerous ; and those who inhabit them are permitted to enjoy their slumbers neither uninterruptedly, nor long—being, every day importuned ; and, in a short time, compelled ; to arise, and put on the white robes of *patriotism*.

I blame no man for not trying to stifle the love of power. But, I blame every man who fondly cherishes it : And I execrate such as would endanger the interests of the community, for the sake of indulging it. The passion is natural. It operates in every region of the earth ; and in every stage of society : and, wherever it operates, it is laudable—provided that it be moderate. Mr. De-
 vaines, in his evidence delivered before the Committee of Council, appointed to enquire into the African Slave Trade, observes, that the Ministers of State of Dahomey, and Whydah, creep on their feet and hands, when they approach, or retire from, their Prince ; that none of the many whom he knew, died a natural death ; and that there is, nevertheless, “ nothing these people will not do to
 “ get into office.”—No British subject would
 abase

abase himself as the African Statesmen do. Yet, as official employment, among us, often adds something to a man's personal importance; and enlarges considerably the sphere of his influence; we every day behold either the enjoyment of it earnestly longed for; or the loss of it sincerely regretted.

On marking the junctures at which my countrymen have uttered their complaints, and their gloomy predictions; on recollecting how often the former have been unjust, and the latter false; and, on considering the motives from which both the former, and the latter have usually sprung; I am convinced, that they have proved hardly any thing in those giving birth to them but folly; and that they have yielded little else to the publick than injuries.

They must, upon the whole, have been marks of folly:—because it is a reproach to any man, to have given rise to a groundless opinion of his country's fortune being adverse; and, because, at all times in which mankind are not divinely inspired, it is out of their power to determine upon what will happen, after the operations of immediate, known causes, have ceased.—The affairs of every people are continually fluctuating. The spirit of enterprize, of any particular people, is
never

never long the same; and this single circumstance often renders it impossible to tell what will be the aspect of things at any given period. But, if the given period be a remote one; and if the calculator take into his account, not only the various changes incident to his own country; but also the influence which other countries have upon those by which they are surrounded; he will soon be led to apprehend, that the chances of error to which he is exposed are innumerable.

They must have been injurious:—because they have infused distrust of our government, into nations disposed to be friendly to our island; because they have nourished faction among our statesmen, and promoted disaffection among our citizens; in fine, because they have subtracted unnecessarily from the tranquillity, and the happiness of the great body of the British people.

Frustrantur falsis gaudia lacrymulis.

Those persons are, perhaps, wise, who treat the lamentations, and the prophecies of politicians, as if they were tragedies; which, while they have little of reality in them, serve to benefit both the writers, and the actors; and to amuse, as well as to depress, the auditors.

From all that has been advanced, I draw the following conclusion.—Neither the king, nor the people, ought to be, in the smallest measure, disquieted, in consequence of the complaints, and the predictions, which they may occasionally hear, from some vain author, or some aspiring Statesman. As to those persons, by whom both the king, and the people, are so faithfully, and so effectually served, they ought to lay their account, that they shall frequently

— “ have their best success ascrib'd to Fortune,
 “ And Fortune's failures all ascrib'd to them.”

And, in the midst of that clamour, which may sometimes arise out of the very means employed in conducting their countrymen to real and durable greatness, it will be of use to them to remember, that Columbus's crew murmured, and mutined, when bound on the discovery of a world.

From all that has been advanced, I draw the following conclusion. — Neither the king, nor the people, ought to be, in the smallest measure, dissatisfied, in consequence of the complaints, and the resolutions, which they may occasionally hear, from some vain babblers, or some ill-qualified persons.

THE GENERAL CONCLUSION.

WHEN certain Roman citizens were desirous of convincing their countrymen, that the reign of Augustus had been productive of some unusually great benefits, they thought themselves fortunate in being able to assert with truth, “ That the government of that Prince had been constitutional and mild; that under him the ocean, and very remote rivers, were the boundaries of the empire; that the legions, the fleets, and all the provinces were united in their attachment to the State; and that, while the Romans were actuated by a sense of moderation and justice towards one another, their allies manifested an high degree of respect and fidelity towards them.”

Could a Briton make it appear to his fellow-subjects, that they enjoy blessings similar to those

those now enumerated, he might soon bring them to admit, that they have good reason for being satisfied with their condition. But, could he make it appear to them, that, while they enjoy blessings similar to those now enumerated, they possess many others of equal, and some of superiour moment; he would have no difficulty in bringing them to admit, that they have good reason for being more than satisfied with their condition — for being, in short, highly delighted with it.

That Britons enjoy blessings similar to the enumerated ones of the Augustan age, may be evinced, by simply fixing their attention on those things which they every day experience; and which their statesmen can, at any time, comprehend almost intuitively. But, as they every day experience such things; and as their statesmen can so readily comprehend them; there can be no occasion for fixing their attention on them.

That they enjoy others of equal, and some of superiour moment, may be evinced, by aiming at hardly any thing more than calling to mind a few of the notions which we acquired, in viewing those very objects, on account of which so many of us have complained, and despaired. This I shall now do.



From

From adverting to the effects of the independence of the Thirteen United States of America, we learned, that Great Britain had lost territories, and a people, the supposed importance of which had long induced neighbouring nations to look upon her with a jealous, and unfriendly eye: but, that she had retained enow both of territories, and of people, to enable her to manifest high respectability, and to display uncommon power. We learned, that she had lost that which was splendid; and which sounded well in the ears of the vain-glorious, and the half-informed: but, that she had retained whatever was useful; and whatever was likely to gain a place in the estimates of the sober and the wise——of persons disposed to prefer, before all other things, the substantial and permanent prosperity of the British empire.

In treating of the Finances, we perceived, that neither the predictions of discredit, and of bankruptcy, uttered during the American war; nor those uttered since the close of that war; had been, in any sense, verified. On the contrary, we perceived, that the revenue, after a trial of almost nine years, bore, and was very likely to continue to bear, to the expenditure—an higher proportion than it had done at any past period.

We found, that the Decline of Trade was a malady of a very old standing; but, happily, one altogether ideal.——We saw some reasons for believing our commerce to have been benefited, and not injured, through the secession of our American provinces; and some for flattering ourselves, that its range would soon be widened, and its value enhanced, in consequence of its being made to flow in channels from which it had unwisely been withdrawn.——The topick of Manufactures, I left unheeded. And I did so, in hopes that it would not escape observation, that, as the increase of the exports of Great Britain, of which a small part only consists in raw materials, has recently been great; so also must have been the growth of her manufactures.

The very short discussion bestowed on the topicks of The Neglect of Agriculture (by agriculture the bulk of writers seem to mean tillage); and the Depopulation of our Villages; gave us a result somewhat to this effect: That tillage is never omitted, in this country, unless for the purpose of securing ends more desirable than any likely to be gained by practising it constantly; and, that, if many villages have been pulled down, not a few, as well as some towns, have been built up, and filled with inhabitants.

Luxury appeared to subsist in our island, in a degree not greater than that in which it had often subsisted before ;—exactly in that degree in which, according to statesmen and philosophers, it ought, and must subsist.

The measure of our Political Corruption, seemed to be considerably greater than any honest man would wish it to be : Yet, no greater, but rather smaller, than it had been at most junctures since the Revolution ; and as small as it is likely to be at any future juncture.

As to the National Character, and the Virtue of the People :—the former appeared as distinct as it had ever done ; while the latter, however defective when considered abstractly, appeared superiour to that of their ancestors.

And, with regard to those complaints which had, most patriotically, been made to embrace all our resources, and all our valuable qualities ; they seemed fitted to produce hardly any thing but laughter.

In thus calling up past perceptions, I have imperfectly recapitulated the results of the arguments used in the preceding Dissertation.

But,

But, in order to point out, in an adequate degree, the felicity of our situation as a people, it would be necessary to do much more than recapitulate :—It would be necessary to take notice of the tranquillity of the nation ; of the stability, and the excellence of the English constitution ; of the advanced price of land ; of the favourable state of exchange ; of the flourishing condition of publick credit ; and, of the encreased, and encreasing consideration in which Great Britain is held by all the leading powers of the world. I shall say nothing upon any of these heads, the two last excepted : and even upon them I shall say little.

When the publick credit of a people is high, it may, in general, be taken for granted, that their affairs are prosperous. The publick credit of the British is now uncommonly high ; and hence we may infer, that their affairs are uncommonly prosperous.—I shall avoid attempting to show (knowing that it would be improper to do so here) how much the rise of our publick credit has been owing to the extension of trade ; to the superabundance of the revenue ; and to the circumstance of mankind knowing themselves to be perfectly safe in relying upon the good faith of our government.

The consideration in which the British have, for some years, been held by surrounding nations, is flattering. — That justifiable wish of every people, to have their friendship courted, and their enmity dreaded, they have lately seen realized in the conduct of several of their more powerful neighbours towards them. The balance of Europe, therefore, through the management of which glory used to accrue to their ancestors; and peace, with its consequent blessings, to a large portion of the inhabitants of the earth; it now befits them well to incline. Respecting this balance, mankind hear but little. When, however, they look around them, and behold one scale rising, and the other sinking, each to its proper level; and then inquire, who has occasioned the preponderation; they are told, Great-Britain and her allies. And those who tell them so, tell them what is true. For a proof of this, I refer to the principal events of Europe during the last four years. I refer, in particular, to what occurred in The United Provinces, when they were delivered from the thralldom of French councils, and reunited to England: to what passed in Denmark, when the menace of a British Envoy was sufficient to induce a successful general to return the sword to its scabbard: to what was experienced in Germany, when the imperial armies retired

retired from a field, in which they had just begun to reap laurels; or in the Austrian Netherlands, which, but for the good offices of the three allied courts, would have been a scene of blood, and of rancorous retaliation: to what was felt in Spain, when the Most Catholic King was compelled, before the face of all christendom, to bow his proud head in submission to the British nation: and, to what has since taken place in Turkey, where the Sultan, and his affairs, have been preserved from impending ruin; and whither a princess, whose victories have been numerous, and whose conquests extensive, has found it necessary to send word, that she is satisfied with retaining a district represented by her Ministers, during the late negociation at Petersburgh, as very insignificant; and by her British advocates, just before the commencement of that negociation, as so extremely insignificant, as to be totally unworthy the serious regard of any sovereign in Europe.—Every man of good understanding, who shall consider candidly all these remarkable events, will, doubtless, have his mind impressed with very favorable notions of the influence, and the dignity, of Great-Britain. As a humane, and a just person, he will rejoice to think that the Roman maxim,

Parcere subjectis, & debellare superbos,

has

has been reduced to practice. And, as a friend to mankind, and a patriot, he will exult in having seen which, but for the good offices of the three courts, would have been a scene of blood, and of "All Europe sav'd, yet Britain not betray'd."

Thus it is that the man of understanding, and of candour, will act. Those, however, who want both understanding, and candour, and likewise those who possess the former, but are deficient as to the latter, will act otherwise. — In remarking upon the interposition of this country and her allies, between the Turk, and his enemies, they will contend, that the effect of it was to protract those hostilities, the termination of which was so desirable. And there is a sense, in which they will be right in doing so. It is this: by detaching the Emperor from the confederacy formed against the Turk, the allies broke a force that would, in one campaign more, have brought his sovereignty in Europe to an end.

But, if they contend for such an opinion, others may contend for a contrary one. They may contend, that the interposition of the allies, ought to be considered as having hastened the termination of hostilities; — having been the cause of the Empress's quitting the theatre of war, twelve, or fifteen months before the time at which it would have

have been practicable for her to accomplish her grand object.

What was this same grand object? It could not be merely to add to her immense empire, the little territory lying between the Bog, and the Dniester? No:—nor yet permission to bestow a few provinces on one of her generals, who had long been, and was likely always to be, entirely at her devotion. It was, in truth, the perpetual possession of all the Ottoman dominions in Europe.

That most of those who have marked the tenour of her life, are persuaded, that her object was nothing less than this, she can hardly doubt. For, she cannot suppose them to have forgotten her classick proposal, of planting a colony of free men (she calls her subjects free) in Greece; of restoring Athens to her ancient splendour; and of once more fortifying the piræus. Nor can she flatter herself, that they will fail of putting the proper construction, on the circumstance of her having long looked, with unusual complacency, on one of her artists;—because, forsooth, he had depicted her as enthroned at Cherfon, with a multitude of Mahomedan chiefs, and princes, doing homage around her; and—with the imperial turban placed under her feet.—In a word, what she retains, is no proof of what she

wished to retain. It proves scarce any thing, but the awe with which the prospect of a rupture with the allied courts had inspired her*.

What

* The military force of the Empress; and the use which she was lately disposed to make of it; have excited much jealousy. Her military force, however, bears but a small proportion to the extent of her dominions; and the extent of her dominions is as nothing, when compared with the magnitude of her ambition.

Of this passion one may say, that, however destructive it has been, or may yet be, there is something in it so bold, and so romantick, that the imagination can not contemplate it without receiving pleasure.—The Emperor Constantine, desirous of holding his court in the midst of the nations that owned his sway, transferred the seat of the Roman government from the west, to the east. On the site of Byzantium, he reared that city which still bears his name; hoping that it would, under his auspices, acquire as much celebrity and veneration, as Rome had ever done.—The Empress Catherine, desirous of holding her court where few of those whom she rules can easily approach her, aims (her object, though now placed beyond her reach, is still the same) at translating the seat of the Russian government, not from the west, to the east; but, from the north, to the south:—to a region—where, in order to possess a new capital bearing her name, she will only have to decree, that the name of Constantine be disused, and that that of Catherine be substituted for it.—She wants, in short, to gratify her vain-glorious mind, by sitting down upon a lofty throne, erected where that of the last of the Cæsars stood;—that, from it, she may overlook the other potentates of the earth; and meditate

What, now, is the sum of all that has been advanced?

With regard to the race of complainers, it is this: As four tempered authors, and mortified statesmen, have, not solely in this age, but likewise in many preceding ones, desponded without reason, and spoken a language congenial to their feelings; so, the depressing language, that may be used by them in these, perhaps in future times, ought to be deemed nothing else than a mere matter of course.

meditate more extensive conquests, and vaster objects of avarice, and ambition.

But, has she yet tried to anticipate the consequences of her aspiring conduct? Does she know what dire calamities Constantine's project brought upon the mistress of the world? Has she no fear of spreading out her dominions so immoderately, that the arm of her strength either cannot extend over them, or must lose its tone in endeavouring to do so? Feels she no foreboding of the evils that might result, from putting her subjects in possession of all those enticing means of luxury, and of corruption, which the Ottoman provinces afford in such uncommon abundance? And, finally, does she flatter herself, that a time will ever come, when the sentiments of the sovereigns of Europe shall have undergone such a revolution, that she will have nothing to apprehend, in the improbable case of complete success, from their envy of her greatness, or their dread of her power?